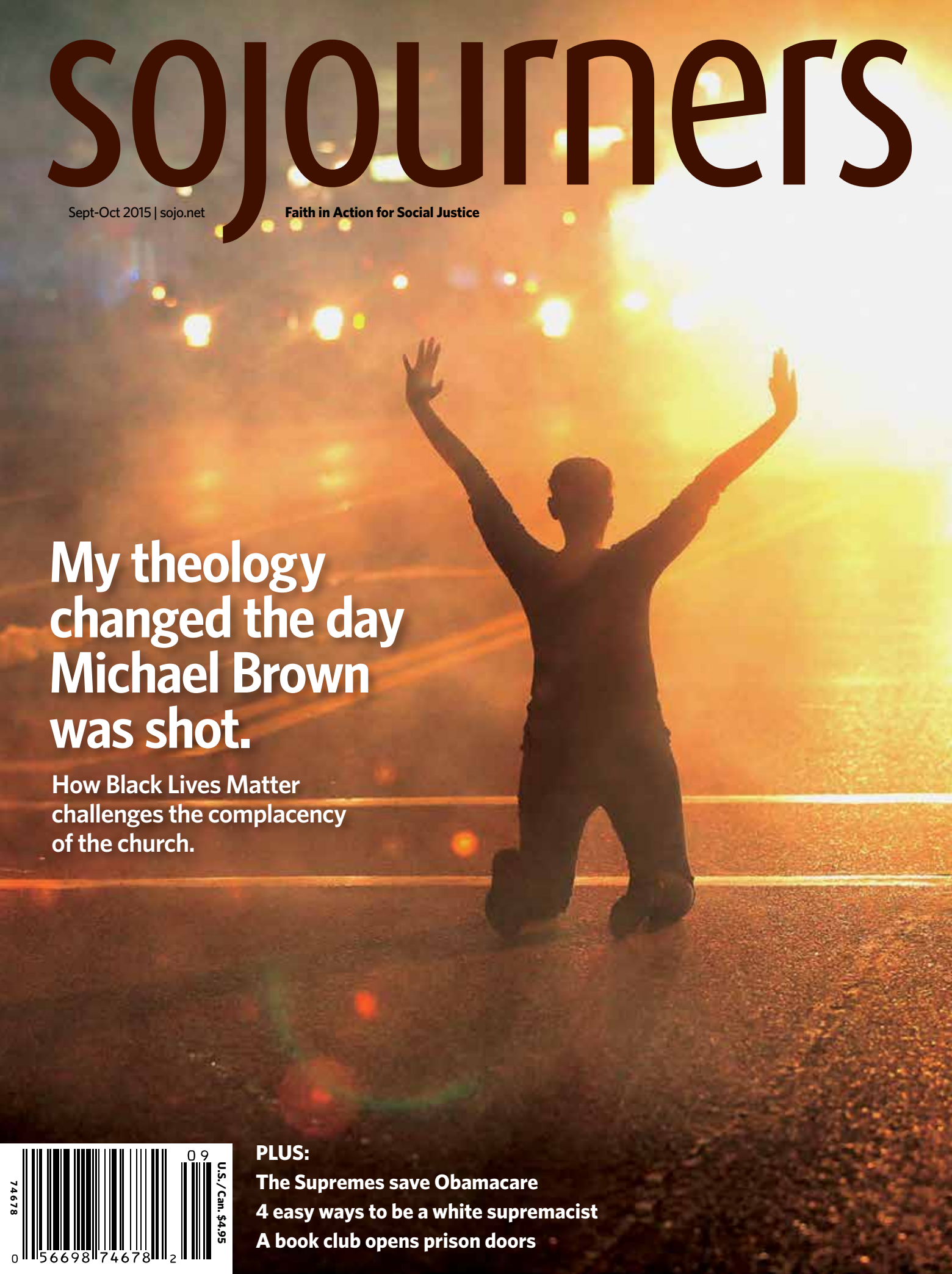


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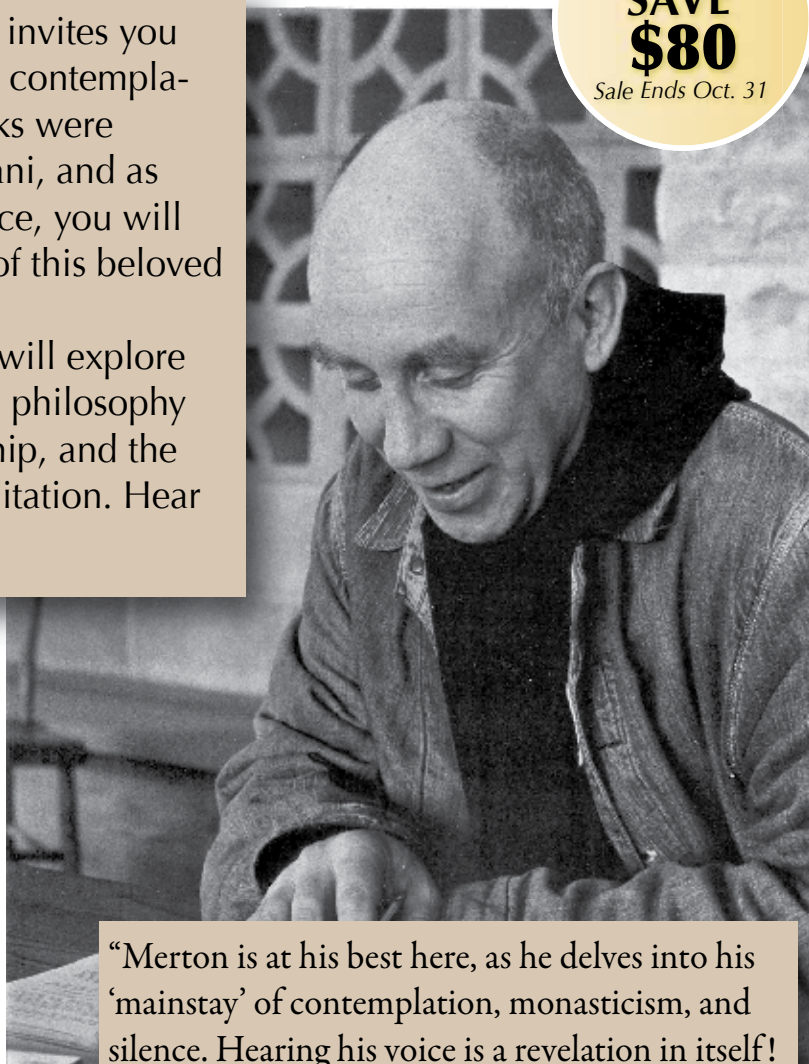
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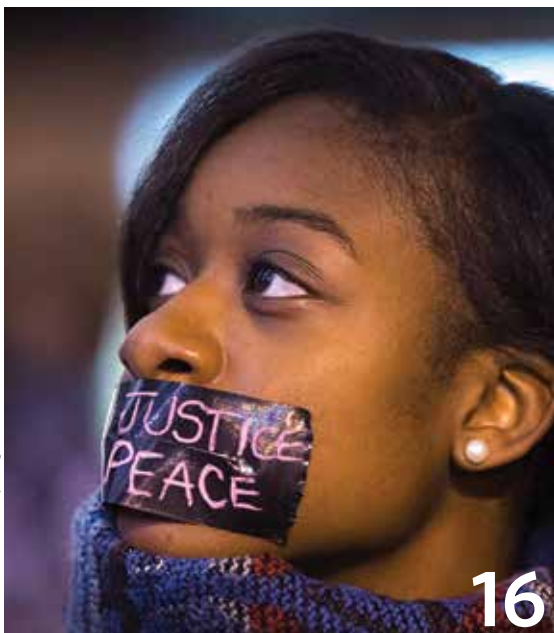
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A MAGAZINE COVER is a tricky thing. It is both illustration and op-ed, text and image, paper and pixels. A magazine cover becomes the face of *Sojourners* for a month and—in the digital world of thumbnail images, Facebook, and Instagram—lives on indefinitely. Or, as Huffington Post reporter Catherine Taibi wrote recently, the magazine cover is “one of the modern age’s most widely consumed pieces of public art.”

What kind of “art” should we make on the first anniversary of Michael Brown’s death, especially as we consider the challenge that the Black Lives Matter movement poses to the church’s complacency on matters of race and justice?

Our early cover ideas for this issue featured photos of mourners at candlelit vigils in Ferguson. But some Christians within the Black Lives Matter movement have critiqued the church for failing to move beyond quiet

vigils to more powerful forms of resistance against white supremacy. “If our theology renders us silent and docile in the face of oppression, then it is quite frankly toxic to our faith,” writes Ryan Herring in his cover article. We ditched the vigil photos.

Taking a cue from the hashtag #SayTheirNames, we considered dedicating this cover to the names of African Americans who have been killed by police violence. We were especially eager to include the names of black women because the violence against black women and girls has not received nearly the attention as the deaths of black men, as Taylor Nichole Johnson points out in “#SayHerName.” Yet, as William Barber II recently explained on sojo.net, focusing exclusively on African Americans who have been killed sends the



message that only black *deaths* can create change. And that is not our message.

In the weeks following the Charleston massacre, many called for a renewal of “prophetic lament.” “Lament is not the passive acceptance of tragedy,” writes Soong-Chan Rah in “No Easy Road to Freedom,” and neither is it “weakly assenting to the status quo.” Rather, the lament of the biblical prophets was powerful—an active resistance against injustice.

That is how we chose the photo you see on the cover. Taken last year on Aug. 17 in Ferguson, the photo shows a woman kneeling, her hands raised in protest. But despite the tear gas that wafts toward her, she is resolute, refusing to be moved or silenced in the face of white supremacy. This is what theology looks like. ■

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Letters

Witnessing Is Not Enough

I am moved by Julia Alvarez’s “Unless Somebody Steps in to Help ...” (July 2015) on the treatment of Haitians in the Dominican Republic. Joining others in places of suffering is our service to humankind. Still, witnessing is not sufficient. In order to address the deepest needs of Dominicans of Haitian descent and Haitian immigrants in the Dominican Republic, we must reinforce the principle of dignity.

Our Unitarian Universalist principles motivate us to step in where we are needed—particularly in the area of monitoring the return of Haitians on the border, facilitating the reintegration of unaccompanied children, and working with the Haitian government on the development and implementation of a national reintegration plan.

William F. Schulz

Cambridge, Massachusetts

We Are Not Marginalized

I interpreted Danielle Ayers and Lydia Bean’s “Reimagining the Bible Belt” (July 2015) as a reminder to myself and other progressives that we need to stop distancing ourselves from our Southern identity. Indeed, the

“I’m very skeptical about being able to transform the evangelical church.”

“laborers are few” and, at times, it’s tempting to leave the South to its ghosts. But our community is growing as we learn to successfully negotiate the legacy of the Old South with a prophetic theology. It is those who are daring to reimagine the Bible Belt that are transforming our region.

Ironically, it was not until I moved deeper into the Bible Belt, from South Carolina to Texas, that I began to cultivate a loyalty to the South. I have never been more proud to claim the South as my own than after working alongside others in El Paso, Texas, to welcome and accompany the immigrant and refugee communities. The authors demonstrate that while we work in the margins, we are not marginalized; our networks continue to develop as we invite others to join us in prophetic witness.

Ali Boyd

Columbia, South Carolina

Accommodating Racism

The “accommodation” discussed in “Reimagining the Bible Belt” is new to me

and explains a lot about Texas. In fact, school integration (and public areas integration) in Sherman, Texas, followed the “accommodationist” pattern, and while integration was accomplished without major conflict, it left the African-American community in a weakened position. Teachers from the African-American community, for example, were not given the same positions in the integrated schools.

I’m with [the authors] on the prophetic element missing in the evangelical church, but I have to admit that I’m very skeptical about being able to transform the evangelical church. The issues are theological and sociological, as you rightly note; I’m not sure they can be transformed.

Terry Hoops
sojo.net comment

“On the other hand ...” Write to letters@sojo.net or Letters, *Sojourners*, 3333 14th St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20010. Include your name, city, and state. Letters may be edited.

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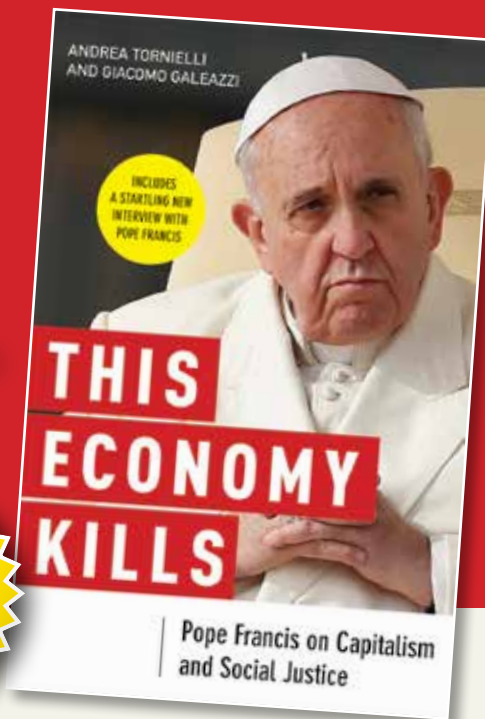
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BY JIM WALLIS

Finding the Way of Hope



ONLY SOCIAL MOVEMENTS really change history. Developing, nurturing, and supporting a new generation of leaders is central to the long-term success of these movements. As leaders like me get older and look to the future, mentoring young leaders is particularly important. More and more of my time is spent doing that mentoring, not only broadly but in relationship to particularly promising young leaders whom I have met. It is some of the most important and enjoyable work that I do.

For many years, Sojourners called together large conferences on biblical justice and peace. Thousands of people came year after year, and many positive

drawn together by experienced justice leaders who nominated them.

IN JUNE, WE hosted our second such gathering. The Summit was capped at about 300 participants to have a gathering small enough for people to actually meet and talk and get things done. This year, 56 percent of attendees were women, including 54 percent of main stage speakers. Fifty-seven percent of attendees were people of color, including 69 percent of main stage speakers. The Sojourners Summit looked like the nation the United States is becoming.

Our opening session, “The Way of Hope,” focused not on the big issues we would deal with over the next few days, but instead on the spiritual foundation of hope, which we all need to sustain our efforts to overcome injustice in its many forms.

An hour after we finished our first evening together, nine black Christians were murdered by a white supremacist in their church in Charleston, S.C., during their Wednesday night prayer meeting. Scheduled sessions the next morning on the “Criminalization of Blackness, Poverty, and Youth” and “Implicit Bias” would already have been powerful, but after the horrible event the night before, everything went deeper—including our relationships with each other. Many expressed how good it was to be together after what had just happened.

WHEN I WALKED into the room the first night and saw who was there, I knew this would be an extraordinary three days. In August 2014, I had met young leaders in South Africa who are determined to complete the national transformation that Nelson Mandela’s generation began. Later that summer, I went to Ferguson, Mo., and met the young leaders there who

were turning a terrible moment into a movement to change our criminal justice system.

Both groups—the young leaders from South Africa and those from Ferguson—were at The Summit. When I saw them connecting, getting to know one another, and talking about their experiences and strategies, my hope for the future took a leap forward. A special closing session, honoring the young leaders and pastors from Ferguson for their risk-taking and perseverance, was one of the most inspirational times of the week.

One session brought together a leader from the Coalition of Immokalee Workers, the CEO of Marriott International, and the secretary-treasurer of the AFL-CIO, who all want to move the nation toward a living wage. Another session focused on new approaches to peace in Syria and Iraq and toward overcoming ISIS. And I have hardly ever seen a standing ovation as powerful as the one following the session on “Moral Injury and Soul Care” for activists and caretakers—many of those gathered were feeling a deep need for the care of their souls as they try to care for others.

The presence of wise and experienced “elders” was another of the highlights of The Summit, which culminated in a ceremony during which each participant came forward to be blessed and prayed for by one of the elders. And artists were a central part of each day’s program, helping to move issues from our heads to our hearts.

Leaders are not just born, they are formed, often by the relationships they create together. Watching that happen at the Sojourners Summit was one of the best and most hopeful parts of my year. ■

Jim Wallis is editor-in-chief of Sojourners magazine.

Many of those gathered were feeling a deep need for the care of their souls as they try to care for others.

things happened—new relationships, connections, projects, and organizations—even marriages and families! Now, several other groups are having justice and peace conferences, which is exactly the kind of “competition” Sojourners has always hoped for.

Last year, some of our younger staff came up with a great idea—to have a leadership “Summit” for people already providing leadership for the biblical vision of justice and peace. All the participants would have to be nominated by credible leaders doing this work, and instead of Justice 101 with big speakers and standing ovations, this would become a new, creative environment for moving justice agendas forward—Justice 202. We didn’t publicly advertise these gatherings—instead, the invitation spread by word of mouth as leaders, especially younger ones, were

Marvin Recinos/AFP/Getty Images



A Symbol of Victory

"My prayers are with the poor, the afflicted, and the oppressed everywhere in the world, as Christ instructs," said Bree Newsome, after removing the Confederate flag from the South Carolina state capitol grounds on June 27. "If this act of disobedience can also serve as a symbol to other peoples' struggles against oppression or as a symbol of victory over fear and hate, then I know all the more that I did the right thing." The state officially removed the flag on July 10.

By Michael Mershon

A Case of Jiggery-Pokery

A frivolous lawsuit brought before the Supreme Court jeopardized health care for millions.

THIS SUMMER'S ATTEMPT to dismantle the Affordable Care Act began as the very height of frivolous lawsuits. Cooked up with the help of the Competitive Enterprise Institute, a libertarian think tank, the case (*King v. Burwell*) depended upon a very narrow reading of four words in Section 36B of the ACA: "established by the State."

Essentially, Obamacare foes argued that Congress intended to provide health-care subsidies (or tax credits) only to those Americans living in states with state-operated insurance exchanges. Those who lived in states without exchanges—including Florida, Texas, Wisconsin, and others—and were, therefore, dependent upon the federal exchange would be ineligible for subsidies.

Of course, Congress intended no such thing—as the Supreme Court upheld. Throughout dozens of hearings and hundreds of hours of debate, it was clear that ACA subsidies would be available to every American, regardless of what state they lived in.

In a 6-3 ruling, the court rejected *King*, with Chief Justice Roberts explaining,

"A fair reading of legislation demands a fair understanding of the legislative plan. Congress passed the Affordable Care Act to improve health insurance markets, not to destroy them."

Had the suit carried the day, 6.4 million Americans would have lost their subsidies. In all likelihood, they would no longer have been able to afford health insurance. But the ACA survived. For Christians, this was a win in defending access to health care for the most vulnerable, a key tenet in Christian social ethics.

Conservative opponents predictably protested what they called runaway judicial activism. Most notable among these was Justice Antonin Scalia, whose dissents are becoming more bizarrely dystopian by the year. Scalia warned of the menaces of "interpretive jiggery-pokery" and called the majority's reasoning "pure applesauce."

The Republican leadership in Congress said all the expected things and threatened to hold the expected meaningless protest votes. With majorities in both the House

and Senate, they may even manage to pass a repeal of the ACA in this year's budget process. Such a repeal would promptly draw a presidential veto that would easily be sustained. And that will be that for now.

Meanwhile, out on the campaign trail, the seemingly endless parade of presidential candidates are making their views known. Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton praised the court's decision and urged everybody to move on. Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders used the occasion to renew his call for a "Medicare-for-all" single-payer system.

Former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee's comments were typical of the Republican response, calling the decision "an out-of-control act of judicial tyranny." Texas Sen. Ted Cruz asserted, "I remain fully committed to the repeal of Obamacare—every single word of it."

For his part, the president hailed the decision on Obamacare as a "victory."

"The Affordable Care Act is here to stay," said President Obama of his most important domestic policy achievement. His

Our Mission

The mission of *Sojourners* magazine is to inspire hope and action by articulating the biblical call to racial and social justice, life and peace, and environmental stewardship.

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administration will spend the next 18 months trying to make the ACA work as well as possible for as many people as possible, to weave it even more deeply into the fabric of the nation's health-care system.

Conservatives such as Barry Goldwater and Ronald Reagan in the 1960s warned of the dangers of what they called socialized medicine, the supposed threats to liberty and freedom inherent in the program that came to be known as Medicare. Today their

ideological successors recoil at the suggestion that anyone would tamper with such a sacred trust. Those vying for the 2064 presidential nomination will undoubtedly likewise embrace Obamacare as an indispensable pledge from a government to its people.

By then, we might even know what "jiggery-pokery" is. ■

Michael Mershon is director of advocacy and communications at Sojourners.

By Leocadie Lushombo

The Land of Gold and Blood

Congo suffers from the paradox of mineral wealth and human poverty.

THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC of Congo is one of the world's poorest countries. In 2014, Congo ranked 186 out of 187 on the United Nations' human development index—vying with Niger for the bottom of the list.

Yet Congo is extremely rich in soil, water, forests, and minerals. Diamonds, copper, gold, oil, uranium, and coltan are all mined, purchased, and traded from the DRC.

Coltan is the ore used in electronic devices. The so call "war of coltan" in the mineral-rich eastern Congo has left millions dead and more than a million women raped. Transnational corporations are able to exert extreme pressure on Congo's weak government and economy. As a result, the country's natural resources have become an important factor in increasing poverty and violence rather than wealth and development.

The Catholic bishops in Congo (about half of the country's population is Catholic) repeatedly have denounced three specific kinds of evil: a climate favoring genocide, outbreaks of religious fundamentalism, and a push toward Balkanization.

Sébastien Muyengo, author of *In the Land of Gold and Blood*, is the Catholic bishop of Uvira in eastern Congo. As a result of the mineral wars, he writes, the country's poverty has become a mental, human, and structural poverty, rather than predominantly material. Yet Congo has resources the rest of the world wants.

Bishop Muyengo argues that after the 1994 Rwandan genocide, which led to the death of 800,000 people, Rwanda transferred its conflict between Tutsis and Hutus to the eastern DRC. As a result, since 1996 more

than 5 million Congolese have been killed, but this genocide has been ignored by the international community. The violence continues unabated and is carried out with impunity.

In "Our Cry for the Absolute Respect for Human Life" released in May, the Catholic bishops of the Bukavu region wrote: "The criminals brutally killed with machetes, knives, or axes; some of their victims had throats cut, the arms of many children are maimed, pregnant women are disemboweled, and entire families are decimated. These are acts of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity."

The bishops contend that young people (both Congolese and foreign) are "deceived by unscrupulous recruiters who promise scholarships for the Middle East, Europe, or Canada." Instead, the youth are trained as soldiers in a "jihadist spirit," then deployed into an arena of international terrorism.

Several stakeholders are maintaining conflicts in Congo, according to the bishops, with the clear intention of Balkanizing the country. "The perpetrators establish a systematic treatment of terror, a strategy of forced displacement of populations to progressively occupy their lands, and the installation of religious fundamentalism outbreaks and terrorist training bases," they wrote. "All this happens in a context of an economic mafia and a military-political racketeering fueled by widespread looting of abundant natural resources: mining, forestry, animal, and oil. The population of the East has the net impression it is unprotected by its own state and abandoned by the international community."

From the Archives

September-October 1996

Burning Churches

AS I RECENTLY

recalled that summer of 1964, I was reminded that slavery was our original sin. Race remains our unresolved dilemma, and today the bombers are back. From an urban church in Knoxville, Tenn., to countless rural churches in South Carolina, Virginia, ... and Alabama, the flames of arson and the hatreds of racism burn again.

On the narrow subject of burning churches, there has been rare bipartisan outrage. Conservative Rep. Sen. Lauch Faircloth of North Carolina said on the Senate floor, "If we in Congress cannot agree that church burning is a despicable crime, what can we agree on? It's not a matter of liberals, conservatives, blacks, whites; it is about justice, faith, right, wrong." He and Sen. Ted Kennedy introduced a bill to toughen the laws against church arson.

Well-meaning whites have also stepped forward to help rebuild churches. The National Council of Churches and the Anti-Defamation League have established national rebuilding funds. Habitat for Humanity is coordinating the labor of volunteers who want to rebuild. Teams of Mennonites and Quakers are rebuilding churches in Alabama. ...

Beyond deploring, rebuilding, toughening laws ... what can you do? You can look deeper into the soul of America. You can be aware of the context in which these acts are taking place and ponder whether you see your own reflection in the pool of indifference that has surrounded racial healing for much of the last 15 years in America. ■

Bill Bradley was a U.S. senator when this article appeared.



The bishops said that the Kabila administration does not prioritize security, peace, and national integrity—and even asked if the government is incapable of addressing the violence or “complicit” with it.

The same question can be asked of the international community. Despite the presence of a U.N. force, the violence has not slowed. According to Muyengo, mass murders have not been sufficiently investigated at either a national or international level. Yet they are planned killings, he says, aimed at destroying whole communities. They should be considered genocidal acts.

All of these factors create and aggravate poverty and violence, which explains the paradox of poverty in the resource-rich DRC.

To foster justice and peace, the Catholic Church's initiatives have to be recognized and supported. First, the 1998 massacre of 648 persons, including priests and nuns, at Kasika and the 1999 incident where 15 people were

buried alive at Mwenga must be memorialized. “True forgiveness, true reconciliation, and sustainable peace,” writes Muyengo, “are grounded in the willingness of assuming the memories of the past and building a better future.” Second, governance committees need funding and organization to foster political participation at the grassroots. Third, international pressure must be put on President Kabila to not run for a third term, which would be a violation of the constitution.

The questions raised by the Catholic bishops in Congo must be echoed by the church worldwide. To raise the DRC off the bottom of the world's poverty list requires empowering Congolese people to organize for the protection of their rights and human dignity. It is necessary that civil society in Congo become an agent of its own liberation. ■

Leocadie Lushombo is an independent consultant and researcher from Kinshasa, Congo, who is studying theology at Boston College.

By Sarah Augustine

Time to End the Papal Bull

After 500 years, the church should rescind the Doctrine of Discovery.

POPE FRANCIS arrives in the U.S. this September to great acclaim. The popular pontiff will speak truth to power in Congress and at the United Nations and preach the necessity of stewarding creation, promoting an economy for life, and defending human dignity.

He also will canonize Junípero Serra, the Spanish Franciscan missionary who founded the first nine of 21 Spanish missions in California in the 18th century—many say on the backs of Indigenous people. While some call Serra a “shepherd and protector,” others argue he symbolizes the colonial conquest of North America through genocide.

Serra was a human being—sometimes noble, sometimes not. However, his conquest operated under a body of Christian law and policy called the Doctrine of Discovery, a series of papal documents (“bulls”) that granted legal right of ownership to whichever European Christian nation arrived first in the new territory. Since 1823 it has also been enshrined in U.S. law. As recently as 2005, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg cited it as the basis for denying a land claim by

the Oneida people, one of the five founding nations of the Iroquois Confederacy.

The Doctrine of Discovery is based on a principle of Roman law called *terra nullius* (“nobody’s land”) and grew out of the church’s conviction that “discovered” lands were devoid of human beings if the original people who lived there (defined as “heathens, pagans, and infidels”) were not ruled by a Christian ruler. “The Doctrine mandated Christian European countries to attack, enslave, and kill the Indigenous Peoples they encountered and to acquire all of their assets,” wrote the World Council of Churches in a 2012 statement.

In the 15th century, the church’s theological justification was based on an interpretation of God’s command to conquer and kill the Canaanites. Christian European rulers were thus empowered to claim land and subdue people. The Great Commission in Matthew 28:16-20 empowered them to go unto all lands, and Romans 13 established the principle of “divine mandate,” with an interpretation that to oppose

the state was to oppose God. In this way, the church constructed a theological and political framework for conquest that shaped law and morality in the “discovered world.”

Was Junipero Serra a kind man, protective and forgiving of the Indigenous people he attempted to convert? Was he cruel, employing segregation between believing and non-believing Indigenous people and corporal punishment for those who resisted working in the mission enterprises that produced cattle and grain for the Spanish colonists in California, as well as for Spain?

To many of the descendants of those he colonized, it doesn't really matter. What matters is the reality we live with now.

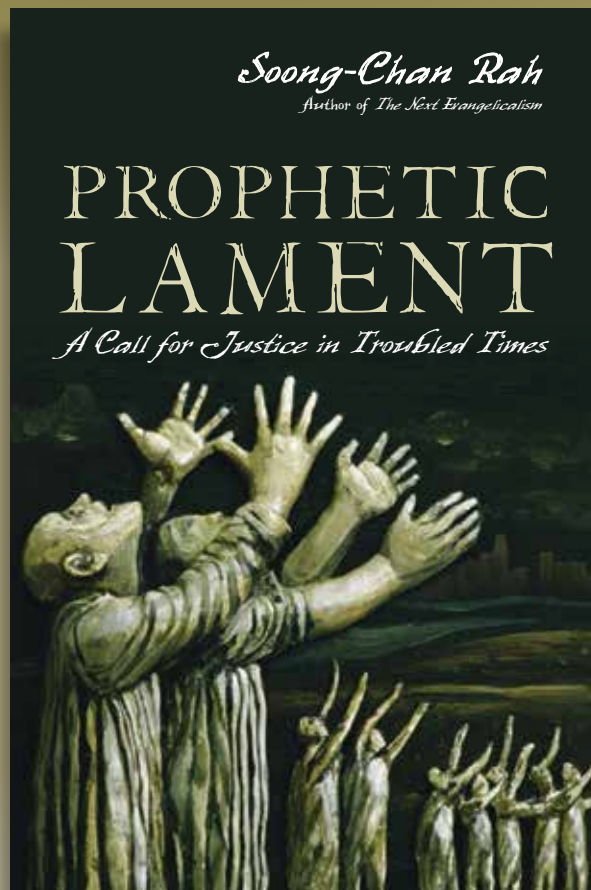
Every year on the Yakama Indian Reservation where I live, Indigenous people and the descendants of settlers hold separate commemorations of our shared history. The Yakama Nation celebrates “Treaty Days,” to remember the 1855 cessation of hostilities between the First Peoples and the U.S. military. Settler descendants hold “Military Days” at Fort Simcoe State Park on the Yakama Indian Reservation to re-enact the military's subjugation of Indigenous people.

Regardless of the intentions of those celebrating Military Days, they glorify a site that symbolizes violence and violation for Indigenous people—not unlike those who venerate Serra without examining the ongoing damage of the colonizing laws that promoted and defended his mission. To justify and glamorize the suppression of Indigenous people is to reinforce 500 years of injustice and sin. What Serra symbolizes matters—because it is part of a system of ongoing oppression.

The World Council of Churches and other Christian denominations have publicly renounced the Doctrine of Discovery. It is incumbent on Pope Francis to discuss the doctrine and then rescind the papal bulls themselves, stating clearly that the doctrine's framework can no longer be justified. Such an act could impact U.S. Indian law as well as global Indigenous policies. And it would give a profound Christian witness for the next 500 years. ■

Sarah Augustine is a professor of sociology at Heritage University on the Yakama Indian Reservation. Like many Indigenous people in the U.S., she does not have a tribal affiliation.

SOONG-CHAN RAH'S INVITATION *to* LAMENT



The American church avoids lament, but it is a missing, essential component of Christian faith. Soong-Chan Rah's prophetic exposition of the book of Lamentations provides a biblical and theological lens for examining the church's relationship with a suffering world. Hear the prophet's lament as the necessary corrective for Christianity's future.

“In Soong-Chan Rah's riveting and provocative commentary on the book of Lamentations, he shows us that there can be no authentic praise and joy without justice, and no true justice without the deep acknowledgement of injustice, pain and sin inherent in the biblical practice of lament. . . . I recommend this book to anyone who wishes to understand and embrace a fuller, more authentic and more just expression of Christianity.”

JIM WALLIS, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The UnCommon Good*, president of Sojourners

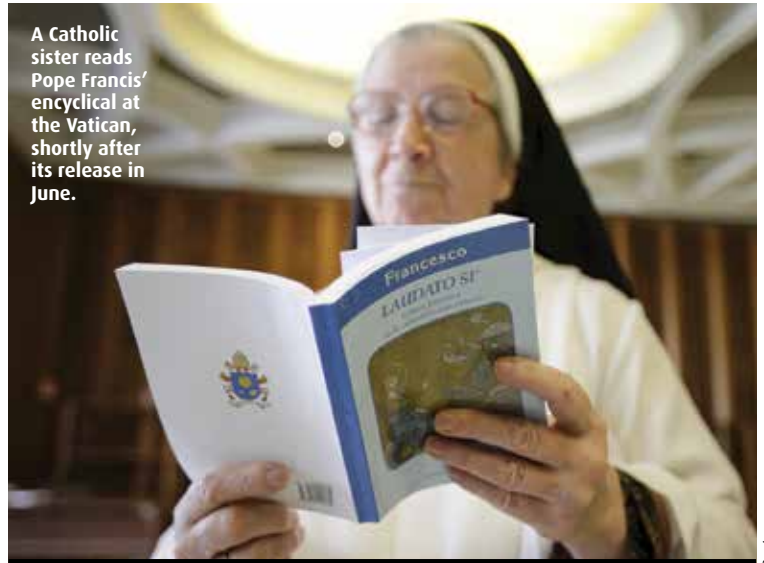

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The Pope's Divisions

THE POPE'S “climate change encyclical,” *Laudato Si’* (“Praise Be to You”), is actually far more than that: It is the most remarkable religious document in a generation, offering a powerful and comprehensive worldview that is consonant with the Bible and hence profoundly countercultural. You owe it to yourself to take a few hours and read it slowly and carefully; you’ll be enlightened, but mostly, if you’re like me, you’ll be reassured. Reassured that someone powerful in this world actually sees our time for what it is, and understands the crises facing our planet for what they are.

Near the beginning, for instance, the pope discusses the “rapidification” of life, the sense that “the speed with which human activity has developed contrasts with the naturally slow pace of biological evolution. Moreover, the goals of this rapid and constant change are not necessarily geared to the common good or to integral and



A Catholic sister reads Pope Francis' encyclical at the Vatican, shortly after its release in June.

Reuters

sacrificed to cheapness. Public spaces are privatized. If all of this sounds familiar, there’s definitely an E.F. Schumacher vibe to the encyclical, more than a touch of Ivan Illich. Quite a bit of Wendell Berry too. It doesn’t come from the Right or the Left; it comes from lived experience.

But those other writers could be—have been—more or less dismissed. The powers that be would like to dismiss Francis too (no less a spokesman for the status quo than Jeb Bush told the pope, in so many words, to butt out of politics). They can’t simply dismiss Pope Francis, however, because something’s changed: The world has come unglued. Francis describes in great detail the climate crisis and its attendant horrors: the droughts, the warming ocean, the melting glaciers. The physical world has been conducting a thorough referendum on our current civilization, and now the results can be read in rising sea levels and falling groundwater tables.

Pope Francis’ letter was greeted with great enthusiasm by many, me included. But the fact that he has

written it does not by itself change the outcome of the battle. He may have united religion with science in this great moment, but the world’s third force—money—so far remains an implacable force. Indeed, the week he published his letter, the U.S. Congress, working in bipartisan fashion, approved the new “fast-track” trade agreement—the perfect distillation of the unquestioning “rapidification” that the pope decries.

So it is up to the rest of us to make this wrenching and radical document real. When Stalin was told that a previous pope had called for the end of repression of Christians, the dictator replied contemptuously: “The pope! How many divisions has he got?”

Doubtless the CEOs of Shell and Exxon are thinking the same thing. It’s time for all of us to be those divisions, and to march with real unity for the kind of world that Pope Francis imagines. ■



Bill McKibben is the Schumann Distinguished Scholar at Middlebury College in Vermont and founder of 350.org.

This is the most remarkable religious document in a generation.

sustainable human development. Change is something desirable, yet it becomes a source of anxiety when it causes harm to the world and to the quality of life of much of humanity.”

That’s as useful a description of the last 100 years as we’re likely to get, that sense of life out of balance. It affects the poor, yes, and the pope is always most mindful of the poor—but it also affects *everyone*. The ever-more-technologized world we inhabit no longer makes us happier. It makes us stressed.

The pope names a litany of other problems: We have become too individualized and so we overlook the common good. Beauty is

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MEET Hector and Sue Badeau, two of our most-longstanding friends. These high school sweethearts connected with us in 1979, when they discovered *Sojourners* magazine and found it a source of inspiration and challenge. They have been tireless supporters ever since. From founding a *Sojourners* “chapter” in their home of Philadelphia to contributing financially to our work through the Sustainers Circle, they have been steadfast allies in the movement for peace and justice.

Sojourners’ Monthly Giving Club

Hector works with a program that serves chronically homeless and mentally ill adults, and Sue has been in the child welfare and juvenile justice fields for 34 years. They are also dedicated and loving parents to their 22 children—their family story was released last year in the book *Are We There Yet? The Ultimate Road Trip: Adopting and Raising 22 Kids!*—and foster parents to 50 more, all of whom they have invited into full participation in their efforts for social justice.

Now grandparents and great-grandparents, the Badeaus continue to be faithful members of our Sustainers Circle. “We believe it is critical to invest in the essential work of ‘going upstream’ to discover the root causes of injustice, poverty, inequality, homelessness, and oppression,” Sue says. “*Sojourners* does important work in this area, and we are committed to supporting that.” Thank you, Sue and Hector, for your longtime partnership!

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Four Easy Ways to Be a White Supremacist

EVEN AS SOUTHERN states—and GOP candidates—jumped through hoops to distance themselves from the Confederate flag, a backlash erupted among those claiming the flag was merely a symbol of “heritage.” Battle-flag waving Southerners (and Confederacy sympathizers) seemed to leap at the opportunity to wave their banner high.

But what about the rest of us? One of the most profound statements I’ve heard recently came from Rev. Jin Kim, founding pastor of Church of All Nations in Minnesota. This Korean-born pastor stood at the podium of the Sojourners Summit and said with conviction: “I am a white supremacist.”

How can this man, a person of color who’s dedicated his life to eth-



Shutterstock

we support (or don’t).

It’s not hard to fume at the thought of the killer of Mother Emanuel’s Nine. And it feels good to click “like” and share posts calling for the removal of Confederate flags.

But if we stop there, bias beats us. It is the unconscious biases of the masses that keep us from moving forward, not the explicit biases of the few. So, check out this tongue-in-cheek list of four easy ways to be a white supremacist (regardless of your own race).

1. Plan a conference on church planting with a speaker lineup so white it would make Honey Boo Boo blush. And if you want to increase your “diversity,” have one speaker of color (even if he is from India), an Asian emcee, and maybe a black worship leader.

2. Make references to “theologians,” “historians,” or “leaders” when their foundation is Western theology, the history of Western civilization, or leadership of a white community. But, when referring to a person of color, reference them as a “black theologian,” “Latino historian,” or “Asian leader.”

3. Envision Jesus as a white person—who speaks with a King James accent.

4. Live in a mostly white private community, place your kids in mostly white schools, go to a mostly white church,

and work in a mostly white office. Then, when a black colleague or “friend” on Facebook posts about Black Lives Matter, accuse him or her of playing the race card.

A 2014 REPORT from the Kirwan Institute identifies a few key things we can do to dismantle the craziness. Here are four:

1. Take the free Harvard Implicit Association Test online.

2. Grow your empathy. Seriously listen to the stories of people who are not white. Read what they write. Watch movies by them, about them.

3. Deepen relationships with people who are not white. The Kirwan report reveals that when folks build relationships with people they were biased against, their unconscious bias levels go down.

4. Take every thought captive. Focusing on a person’s unique traits, as opposed to their group affiliation, lowers implicit bias scores. When I’m talking with people who I’m tempted to write off as “just a [fill in the blank],” I look them in the eyes (if I can) and remember that the image of God lives inside them, and I sit in that truth.

Together, let’s kick bias’ butt! ■

At its heart, white supremacy is not about white hoods and burning crosses.

nic and cultural reconciliation, be a white supremacist? The same way any of us can.

After all, at its heart white supremacy is not about white hoods, battle flags, and burning crosses. Those symbols are what we call explicit bias. People know when they are practicing it.

But most often white supremacy is about *implicit* bias that favors whiteness. It’s about the unconscious associations we make in our minds before we even know we’ve done it. White? Rich. Black? Poor. White? Good. Black? Bad. White? Trustworthy. Black? Scary. You get the idea.

These are the unconscious biases that shape the way we order our lives; the communities we live in, the places we shop, the churches we attend, the leadership from others we accept (or reject), and the policies



Lisa Sharon Harper (@lisasharper) is chief church engagement officer for Sojourners and co-author of *Forgive Us: Confessions of a Compromised Faith*.



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'NOW IS A TIME for Theology to Thrive'

**The Black Lives Matter movement offers a challenge to the church—
and an opportunity • by RYAN HERRING**

AUG. 9, 2014, is a day I'll never forget. It was the day that Michael Brown was killed by Ferguson, Mo. police officer Darren Wilson.

For many young people in the United States, especially those of us involved in the Black Lives Matter movement, this was our Sept. 11. We all remember exactly where we were and what we were doing when the news broke of another police-involved killing of an unarmed black citizen.

I was in the final days of a yearlong internship with Sojourners. My fellow interns and I were on our closing retreat in West Virginia. I was on my phone checking my Twitter timeline when I began to see retweets of images: Michael Brown laid out on Canfield Drive with blood still leaking from his bullet wounds. I remember the anger that instantly came over me. "Not another one!" was all I could think.

As the day wore on, I felt frustrated that I was stuck in a retreat house, forced to sit idly by while the grieving community in Ferguson was antagonized by officers in riot gear with police dogs. I knew then that I had to do whatever it would take to join the people in this fight for justice. I never imagined how this movement would change the way I—and many others—actually *do* theology.

Justice-seeking has always been central to

my Christian identity. I grew up in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, a denomination born out of the fight for freedom and in protest against racial discrimination and slavery, as many have learned after the massacre at Emanuel AME in Charleston, S.C.

However, it became apparent early in the Black Lives Matter movement that "justice" was not part of the spiritual imagination or vocabulary for many U.S. Christians.

On the issue of police brutality, churches across the nation were virtually silent. For some, it was the silence of indifference. For others, it was fear—fear that this

hot-button topic would split their congregations, would lose them membership or support.

Two months after Michael Brown's killing, Ferguson organizers issued an invitation for clergy from around the country to come to Missouri and march on the frontlines. This was a pivotal moment for the movement. On Oct. 13, dozens of clergy arrived to join a four-day action of prayer and protest. As many as 43 people, many of them clergy, were arrested as part of a planned civil disobedience action. As clergy faced police in riot gear, Rev. Osagyefo Sekou said, "We are saying that these officers are members of our society and that they are part

**For many
young people,
this was our
Sept. 11.**

Background images by Getty Images





of a racist and sinful system. We are offering them the opportunity to repent and to be reconciled into our community.” As protests began to spread nationwide, clergy made headlines. No longer could churches and denominations afford to be silent. They needed to have an analysis of the social climate.

A call to reform

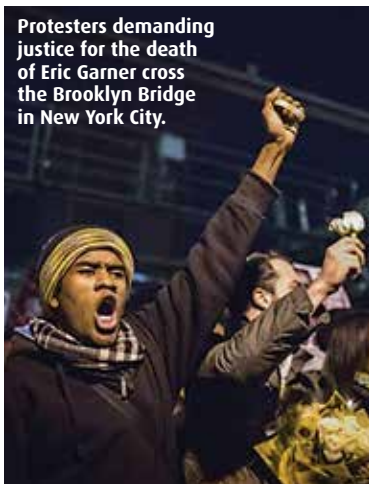
As the Black Lives Matter movement continues to grow, it has become increasingly necessary that churches address the turmoil in the streets.

David Wigger, a 29-year-old recent graduate of Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, was one of the clergy arrested in October. “This movement is challenging the church to *be* the church ... to be creative and prophetic,” Wigger told *Sojourners*. “It is challenging the church to live into its calling, to risk stability for faithful action, and to both follow *and* lead. It is challenging the church to be a witness in the world and to live beyond the four walls or a Sunday service. It is challenging the church to be better.”

Caitlin Fair, a 27-year-old teacher, organizer, and “artist” who attends the nondenominational Kingdom Church in Ewing, N.J., believes the Black Lives Matter movement “challenges the church to push past its theological comfort zone. It requires the church to step out into a territory that may be intimidating, but is absolutely integral to authentic Christian discipleship.” For Fair, “a church that is not actively engaged in discussions and actions around the issues we are currently facing is doing a disservice to its congregation and the people it intends to serve.”

Along with the call to bring the church to the

streets is also a call to reform what happens in the church. Recent Pew surveys show that Millennials are leaving churches in droves. This is partly due to the fact that some churches appear to have become safe havens for racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia. When young people think critically about the multifaceted and systemic nature of racism and the oppressions they face, too often churches appear to be passively maintaining the mechanisms of white supremacy and privilege. This is a critical element of the theological crisis.



Protesters demanding justice for the death of Eric Garner cross the Brooklyn Bridge in New York City.

When it comes to building a movement, Candace Simpson, a second-year student at Union Theological Seminary in New York, sees the value in intergenerational spaces such as church, but she has questions. “How do we support movements, like Black Lives Matter, when as an institution we frequently shame the not-so-respectable, welfare recipients, unwed mothers, incarcerated people, or queer people?” asks Simpson. She believes this movement will “challenge us to think more broadly about this word ‘leader’”

Reuters

and will perhaps “snap us out of expecting that a good word only comes from a man in a suit or a woman who wears pantyhose.”

The church cannot be challenged without also challenging our theology. When I began seeing protest signs that read “James Cone Was Right” and “This Is What Theology Looks Like,” I knew that, for the majority of Christians in this country, there would be a wide gap in understanding. Many Christians would not be familiar with Cone and his black liberation theology, would not understand that systemic oppression requires a theological analysis, would not know





how to respond to the injustice that systemic sin creates or feel comfortable doing so.

If our theology renders us silent and docile in the face of oppression, then it is quite frankly toxic to our faith. What good are we to society and to God's kingdom if we are sitting in pews while the world around us suffers and burns? Our theology should inform our actions as Christians. Jorge Juan Rodriguez V, another student at Union Theological Seminary, says, "Theology happens when we offer our bodies in solidarity with the oppressed, disrupting the systems that perpetuate oppression."

A moment of theological crisis?

If this movement challenges the church's theology, then is it a moment of theological crisis? For Christians such as me, who feel that too much of U.S. Christianity has been co-opted by values of empire, the answer is an emphatic yes. This movement has further exposed the ways in which our theology has failed us. "Many of my activist peers articulate a complex spirituality and engage in practices like meditation or prayer," says Simpson, "but they have been hurt so badly by church messages that they would never attend anyone's church. We've sadly pushed so many people away from the church that they make unnecessary distinctions between faith and activism."

David Wigger and Caitlin Fair, however, describe this moment not as a crisis, but as an opportunity or a crossroads. Similar to an identity crisis where one undergoes a drastic change to one's meaning system, the Black Lives Matter movement requires Christian theology to be transformed. "This is a definitive moment in the life of theology, America, and myself," says Digger. "It is not a time of crisis, but a time of fulfillment. Now is a moment for theology to come into its own. Now is a moment for theology to live into the Word and the

Spirit. Now is a time for theology to thrive."

Fair sees this as "an opportunity to stop skipping over difficult portions of the biblical text, parts that don't fit into the peaceful, passive narrative. It's an opportunity to explore who Jesus was, and what the Bible actually says, in totality."

"We focus on things like helping the poor through coat drives and food drives because it's easy and it makes us feel good. It's not messy. It doesn't involve politics and difficult discussion. However, this kind of participation

is not only underdeveloped and irresponsible, but it is un-Christlike. Jesus was a radical. He was persecuted for his beliefs and teachings. I believe this moment presents an opportunity for the church to re-engage in the radical work that it is intended to be doing."

Dr. John Jefferson Davis, professor of systematic theology and Christian ethics at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, maintains that theology is like a backbone in a healthy body. "The backbones in our bodies, like the foundations and electrical and plumbing systems in our homes, are usually taken for granted—until something goes wrong," Davis writes. "Like a healthy backbone in a healthy human body, sound biblical theology can provide support, shape, and stability to the body of Christ."

Members of the body of Christ continue to be terrorized, murdered, and lynched by those sworn to "protect and serve." We must continue to develop a theological analysis that ensures that neither dignity nor humanity is stolen from our black sisters and brothers. As Christians, we must make the connection between the cross at Golgotha and the one at Canfield Drive. ■

**It became
apparent early in the
movement that "justice"
was not part of the
spiritual vocabulary
for many U.S.
Christians.**

***Ryan Herring** is founder and editor-in-chief of *The Ghetto Monk* (theghettomonk.com). He has been organizing against police brutality in Louisville, Ky.*





#SayHerName

Honoring our sisters before they become a hashtag • by TAYLOR NICHOLE JOHNSON



Getty Images

An activist marching in Ferguson, Mo.

"BLACK WOMEN AND GIRLS are killed by the police, too." I can't tell you how many times I've received a blank stare when I made this statement, even in activist spaces. Occasionally I'll see a few affirmative nods, but overwhelmingly there is apathy. I leave with a sick feeling, wondering, "Where is the rage and protest for my sisters?" and "Who will fight for my life?"

In May, Black Lives Matter, Black Youth Project 100, and Ferguson Action came together for a national day of action for black women and girls. We wanted to shed light on the fact that black women and girls, in all our complexities, have been erased from the broader narrative of police terrorism and modern-day lynching in this country. Cities such as Oakland, Calif., New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, and Miami all participated in powerful acts of public resistance that involved reading the names of women who have been killed by police and using the hashtag #SayHerName as an awareness tool on social media.

Speaking our sisters', daughters', and mothers' names at a vigil on a day set aside to acknowledge our humanity is powerful, because it says: When the world has forgotten Mya, Aiyana, Tanisha, Rekia (and so many others), we will not forget.

However, mourning our dead is not where the work begins. It begins with honoring and fighting for us while we are still alive, long before we become a hashtag.

For communities of faith:

#SayHerName means naming how the church has failed black women. For many black women, the church has been a site of violence and shaming. Many black girls experience sexual abuse from trusted leaders and are told





that our bodies and sexuality are shameful. While congregations are often majority women, sexual violence, trans- and homophobia, and sexism are rarely rebuked as sin from the pulpit. Church leaders and educators must be proactive in addressing these issues from their positions of power by utilizing womanist theological tools in their sermons and curricula.

#SayHerName means affirming black women as being created in God's image. Black Lives Matter is more than a political statement; it is a theological affirmation that black women and girls are made in the image of the Creator. This affirmation includes naming the ways God has gifted women, especially in regard to leadership. In light of how the mainstream narrative of the black freedom struggle has erased the legacy of black women's leadership, we must be intentional this time to lift up, document, celebrate, and affirm black women's leadership in all its forms. We must not wait for a black charismatic male preacher to lead this movement.

#SayHerName means supporting black women in their journey toward liberation. Black women and girls have the right to define themselves for themselves. Those that call themselves accomplices in our liberation have a moral responsibility to financially support organizations and projects that directly benefit black women and girls in these pursuits. In addition, black women have historically been uncompensated for their labor, so this also means giving black women full credit where credit is due for our significant contributions to the black freedom struggle, then and now.

Across the country, a growing wave of sisters is demanding—and willing to put our lives on the line for—the right to be safe, heard, and visible. We believe that fighting for our freedom is our duty. Being silent is no longer an option. ■

Taylor Nichole Johnson, a former Sojourners intern and recent graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, lives in Philadelphia.

No Easy Road to Freedom

The path toward creating a culture where “black lives matter” begins with lament.

by SOONG-CHAN RAH

THE KILLING OF 18-year-old Michael Brown in Ferguson, Mo., last year and the events that followed sparked protests by the community in the St. Louis area asserting that black lives matter and ignited a discussion on race relations in the United States.

On the heels of non-indictments in the slaying of Brown and other black men, our nation focused its attention on the drastic inconsistencies inherent in our judicial system. To many observers, black lives had less standing in our nation than white lives.

Rodney King, Trayvon Martin, Mike Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, Walter Scott, and the churchgoers in Charleston, S.C., are part of a long list of black victims of violence. They are victims of an American narrative that devalues black souls, black lives, black bodies, and black minds. In response to these tragic events, particularly since the non-indictment of the police officers who killed Brown and Garner, many evangelicals have been calling for a biblical practice that is often absent in American Christianity—the call to lament.

On one level I am thrilled that evangelicals are discovering the importance of lament in dealing with racial injustice. However, I am concerned that the way lament is





A member of the clergy weeps during a protest outside the Ferguson police station.

being used by some white evangelicals is a watered-down, weak lament that is no lament at all.

Lament is not simply feeling bad that Brown won't be able to go to college. Lament is not simply feeling sad that Garner's kids no longer have a father. Lament is not asserting your right to confront the police because, as a white person, you won't be treated in the same way that a black protester may be treated. Lament is not the passive acceptance of tragedy. Lament is not weakly assenting to the status quo. Lament is not simply the expression of sorrow in order to assuage feelings of guilt and the burden of responsibility.

The book of Lamentations responds to a very real tragedy in the history of Israel. What does Lamentations teach us about the lost practice of lament and how does it apply to the racialized events surrounding Ferguson and the ensuing conflict?

A deep and painful history

Lamentations 1 depicts the reality of death and suffering that leads to the appropriate response of lament. The city of Jerusalem has died, and Lamentations 1 initiates a funeral dirge in response. On both the individual level and on the corporate level, Lamentations 1 challenges us with the necessity of a funeral dirge in the narrative of Ferguson.

The body of Michael Brown was not accorded proper respect. The dead body lying on the streets of a quiet apartment complex in a Midwestern suburban town demanded a proper funeral dirge in the community. The absence of a funeral dirge creates an emotional and spiritual vacuum. Not only is proper mourning required for the loss of one made in the image of God, but there is the ensuing shame that a human life was handled without dignity.

The use of the funeral dirge genre in Lamentations reminds us that historical reality cannot be ignored. Funeral dirges are required when we do not deal with the dead bodies of history. Ferguson is a suburb of St. Louis, Mo., a state that entered the Union as a compromise to ensure the continuation of slavery in the United States.

Getty Images





St. Louis was also the site of a significant decision that declared that black lives do not matter. The Dred Scott decision handed down from the federal courthouse in St. Louis denied U.S. citizenship and effectively denied human identity for African Americans. These historical realities find expression in the complicated narrative of injustice endemic to the Ferguson shooting. The lack of concern for black lives was revealed to be a systemic problem in Ferguson. An investigation of the Ferguson Police Department by the Department of Justice revealed that there was a pattern of unconstitutional policing shaped by a focus on revenue rather than on public safety. Ferguson police operated with clear racial disparities that adversely impacted African Americans and showed discriminatory intent. The use of African Americans as a source of revenue reflects a longer history of using black bodies for economic gain.

The declaration that “black lives matter” found expression in an area of our country that had declared that black lives do *not* matter. We cannot “solve” the problem of race in America while ignoring our deep and painful history. Our tendency to ignore our tainted history may arise from a warped self-perception, the mistaken concept that we do not need to deal with our tainted past because we have risen above that problematic history and moved to a post-racial, color-blind America. An assumed exceptionalism belies the belief that we do not have to deal with our history because through our exceptional status we have overcome the past. The destruction of black bodies and black minds can be justified because their sacrifice helped to build our exceptional nation. Privilege and exceptionalism exempt us from engaging in the necessary work of dealing with our lamentable history.

The voice of the suffering

As Lamentations moves forward, we encounter a myriad of voices, but the voice of the suffering is often presented as a feminine voice: Jerusalem personified as a woman; the shame of an abused woman; the anguished cry of widows; the suffering endured by mothers. As privileged

celebrants, we often have the luxury of ignoring the suffering other, but Lamentations expressed as a feminine voice reminds us to hear the voices of those in our society who often bear the greatest burden of suffering.

As is often the case in the tragic killing of a young black male, the mothers of the slain are often ignored while the voice of the victimizer emerges front and center. The names of Michael Brown’s mother and grandmother have faded from memory, but the argument of Darren Wilson’s innocence continues. In December 2014, when I visited Ferguson with a group of Christian leaders from all over the country, I was struck by the depth of pain expressed by the older African-American women who were present. They voiced a lament that only comes from identifying with others who have had to bury their children.

An important theme that emerged from the frustration over the non-indictments was the call by many to hear the stories of African-American brothers and sisters. Instead of being quick to judge, many Christians felt the need to listen. I would strongly affirm that call as an important aspect of lament. We did not need to hear from the ministry experts who pontificated from the comfort of upper-middle-class, white, suburban churches. Instead, the voices of black women who lost their children and the victims of police brutality needed to be the central voices we heard as an important aspect of the practice of lament. Listening to the suffering community does not imply that one party is completely innocent while the other party is completely guilty. Instead, it acknowledges that the dead body in the street is once again the body of a black male. We make special effort, therefore, to listen to the voices of those who have been damaged (and often times re-traumatized) by these tragic events.

Lament, however, does not mean silence. In Lamentations 3, we encounter an intensified acrostic that attempts to cover the full expression of human suffering from A to Z. Our lament, therefore, should hear from the full range of voices. At the same time, Lamentations 3 evokes the voice of the narrator (Jeremiah) to speak on behalf of the people. Listening to the previously silenced





There are no easy answers to unabated suffering. Lament continues.

voices is an essential first step in the practice of lament.

But a passive lament that fails to confront injustice also fails to consider the power of prophetic advocacy in lament. Many white evangelicals feel helpless when the issue of race comes up. I often hear the refrain from white evangelicals in the midst of a situation such as Ferguson, “I don’t know what to do!” Many have taken the important first step of being attentive to the long-hidden history of oppression and the personal lament of individuals who have experienced racial injustice. However, Lamentations shifts from a personal lament to a corporate lament with Jeremiah, as the prophet-narrator, speaking in solidarity with the suffering.

In pursuit of racial justice

In Lamentations 4 there is a reprisal of the form of the funeral dirge of Lamentations 1 and 2 as well as a recapitulation of the major themes in the first three chapters. Even as voice is given to the formerly silenced voices, we are reminded that the suffering continues. Injustice is not so easily defeated.

The gathering of Christian leaders in Ferguson after the non-indictment of Darren Wilson resulted in a significant commitment to continue to pursue racial justice. These Christian leaders, from varying backgrounds, generations, and ethnicities, were inspired by the example of young leaders who led the protest movement in Ferguson. We were impressed with the good work of the local churches that sought to be the shalom presence for the city by hosting and serving those involved in the non-violent protests.

As we were getting ready to wrap up our final session, there was an energetic optimism about the church’s potential response to a deep-seated and systemic racism. In the middle of our final session, various phones in the room started to buzz. One of the participants in the room announced that there had been a verdict in the Eric Garner murder—another non-indictment. The confident and optimistic air in the room evaporated. We tried to

continue the meeting for a few minutes, but we could not.

Several of the African-American participants left the room after the verdict was announced. One of the youngest participants in the group was an African-American man in his 20s. We could hear him crying in the hallway. The meeting adjourned as the entire group went out to comfort the young man. He began to cry out: “They had video. How could they not indict? There was video this time. ... Why would I want to bring a child into this world? What future would he have?” His lament weighed heavily on all of us. We were reminded that injustice is not easily defeated. Even after multiple laments had been offered, we couldn’t just get over it. There was no “manning up,” and no happy, idealized multiracial worship service to run to. Lament was needed once again. We embraced the young man as he lamented. The inner circle of embrace comprised several older African-American women who surrounded the young man.

Lament will not allow us to revert to the easy answers. There is no triumphalistic and exceptionalistic narrative of the American church that can cover up injustice. There are no easy answers to unabated suffering. Lament continues.

I pray that the events of Ferguson and the ensuing debate about racial injustice will have a positive impact on the American church. We can no longer brush off the long-suffering of others. The church must recover the practice of lament to combat a triumphalistic narrative that hinders the authentic confrontation of injustice in our world. The oft-forgotten book of Lamentations may help to serve as that corrective. ■

Soong-Chan Rah is the Milton B. Engebretson Professor of Church Growth and Evangelism at North Park Theological Seminary in Chicago. This article is adapted from his forthcoming book, *Prophetic Lament: A Call for Justice in Troubled Times*. Copyright (c) 2015 by Soong-Chan Rah. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, P.O. Box 1400, Downers Grove, IL 60515. www.ivpress.com



Dismantling Gender Bias

**Why are biases so difficult to identify, name, and change?
It all starts in our unconscious minds.**

by **JOSHUNDA SANDERS** • illustration by **JON KRAUSE**

AS WE APPROACH A PRESIDENTIAL election in which each candidate's gender is sure to be discussed, it's worth evaluating the automatic assumptions we—yes, all of us—make when it comes to women, men, and the meaning we attribute to gender. These assumptions include everything from outright sexism to subtler forms of gender bias, such as the knee-jerk association of men with “competence” and “gravitas,” women with “incompetence” and “emotion.”

“The battle for women to be treated like human beings with rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of involvement in

cultural and political arenas continues, and it is sometimes a pretty grim battle,” writes Rebecca Solnit in the title chapter of *Men Explain Things to Me*, a 2014 collection of essays that helped coin the term “mansplain.” “This is a struggle that takes place in war-torn nations, but also in the bedroom, the dining room, the classroom, the workplace, and the streets.”

I would add, of course, that this battle also takes place in the church, our spiritual homes. After all, for women this is a struggle that's older than feminism, perhaps as old as our faith traditions themselves. So how, exactly, can we end the battle?

**“The strongest support for patriarchy
is the description of God
as a white man.”**



The answer, it seems, lies in understanding the difference between explicit and implicit bias, the former resulting from deliberate stereotypes, the latter a growing topic in social science that doesn't absolve us of guilt but helps us understand how biases of all kinds have been so difficult to identify, name, and change.

CHERYL STAATS, senior researcher at the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at Ohio State University, told *Sojourners* that implicit bias is best understood as “attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner,” including “the associations we carry around in our minds.”

And while implicit bias is helpful for understanding the unconscious associations we carry about gender, implicit bias

the serious discrimination is implicit, subtle, and nearly universal.”

WHEN STAATS EXPLAINS how implicit bias influences gender, she often cites “Orchestrating Impartiality: The Impact of ‘Blind’ Auditions on Female Musicians,” a 1997 paper by economists Cecilia Rouse and Claudia Goldin.

In 1970, female musicians made up less than 5 percent of all players in the top five U.S. symphony orchestras, but by 1997 they were up to 25 percent; Rouse and Goldin wanted to know why. Since “many of the most renown male conductors have, at one time or another, asserted that female musicians are not the equal of male musicians,” Rouse and Goldin hypothesized that the increased numbers of women who advanced to final auditions was related to the imple-

may be part of what has pushed women out of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. As evidence, she cited a 2012 double-blind study that randomly assigned a male or female name to fictitious application materials and delivered them to science faculty at research universities. The study found that faculty—both male and female—“rated the male applicant as significantly more competent and hireable than the woman with identical application materials.” Williams also cited a 2014 study that found that jobs requiring math were twice as likely to go to a man, whether the person hiring was male or female.

IN THE CHURCH, much as in the workplace, confronting gender bias—both explicit and implicit—seems to fall squarely on the shoulders of committed women of faith.

For Jann Aldredge-Clanton, a Baptist minister and a professor at Perkins School of Theology, the idea of challenging patriarchy in the church was impossible until she read *All We're Meant to Be: Biblical Feminism for Today*. Written in 1974 by Letha Dawson Scanzoni and Nancy A. Hardesty, two women who helped found Christian Feminism Today (formerly the Evangelical Women's Caucus), *All We're Meant to Be* challenges the assumption that a biblical, God-honoring faith must be strictly patriarchal. The book planted a seed that God “might be more than male,” Aldredge-Clanton told *Sojourners*. “At that time, the only way that feminism could reach me was through the Bible.”

Aldredge-Clanton was eventually ordained in Waco, Texas, and wrote about her own journey toward Christian feminism in *Breaking Free: The Story of a Feminist Baptist Minister*. But in the years since her ordination, she discovered that ordaining women was only one step toward a culture that bestows value on women as full members of the Christian community.

“I began to see intersectionality and how people are marginalized and oppressed as it relates to gender,” she said. Like Mary Daly, Rosemary Radford Ruether, Katie Cannon, and other theologians who talk about the power of language to shape our world, Aldredge-Clanton explained that adding women and people of color to the imagery, texts, and rituals we use to describe the divine can heal the wounds of racism and sexism.

For women this is a struggle that's older than feminism, perhaps as old as our faith traditions themselves.

also affects associations about race, class, and physical ability. For example, the recent U.S. outcry about the disproportionate arrests, brutality, and death experienced by black and brown people at the hands of white law enforcement officers is partly a conversation about implicit bias—the implications of automatically associating white with “law-abiding” and black with “law-breaking.”

So while explicit bias is a conscious expression of one's stereotypical beliefs, implicit bias is unconscious, a kind of prejudice we exhibit without even realizing it. “These are associations—favorable or unfavorable—that you make when you think about a group that may or may not be accurate,” explained Staats. “They occur in a part of our minds that works quickly. It's an involuntary dynamic.”

And it is the subtle reinforcement between implicit and explicit bias—our unconscious associations and our deliberate actions—that requires the attention of those who want to untangle their nuances. But this is challenging. “Many of our anti-discrimination policies focus on finding the bad apples who are explicitly prejudiced,” wrote *New York Times* op-ed columnist David Brooks in 2013. “In fact,

mentation of blind auditions—in which those auditioning sit behind a screen, out of view of the judges—in the 1970s and '80s.

They were right: After analyzing orchestra personnel rosters and audition data, Rouse and Goldin found that blind auditions increased a woman's chances of advancing from preliminary rounds by 50 percent. The stark results were also instrumental in increasing the number of women in American and European orchestras in the decades that followed.

Despite such hopeful examples, patterns of implicit bias negatively affecting women remain. “Beliefs about gender differences continue to persist even in the face of knowledge about their instability and reduction over time,” write psychologists Kristi Lemm and Mahzarin R. Banaji in their 1999 paper “Unconscious attitudes and beliefs about women and men.” And these lingering beliefs—even when we know they aren't true—have a profound effect.

For example, many people automatically associate women with an affinity for language and arts and men with excellence in math and science. And as law professor Joan C. Williams wrote earlier this year in the *Harvard Business Review*, this association

"The more I studied, the more I realized that the foundation of this patriarchal culture was the belief that the most powerful image and the strongest support for patriarchy is the description of God as a straight, white man," she said.

Using exclusively male-gendered language for God is usually an example of explicit gender bias—when we consciously think of God as masculine, we use male descriptors. But according to Mary E. Hunt, a feminist theologian and co-founder of Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER), exclusive language is also "the first-level articulation of *implicit* gender bias."

"If we talk about God as Father, Lord, Ruler, King, that is how people experience the world," Hunt told *Sojourners*. "Opening up the possibilities, you have a whole new lease on life in terms of how the divine might look."

Language that glorifies God as strictly male discourages women from participating as fully as possible in the body of Christ. For Carol Howard Merritt, a Presbyterian pastor and writer, that was nearly the case: "I grew up in a very conservative Baptist church and I always had a real calling to preach," she explained. "But I was told growing up that women in the church should be silent, so it was difficult for me to hear this calling and not think that it was a sinful thing. I went into PC(USA) and people began to affirm my calling and affirm my gifts, and it provided me with an amazing moment of grace."

ACCORDING TO HUNT, Christian denominations looking to dismantle gender bias have plenty of resources. Twenty years ago, the United Church of Christ made headlines by creating a hymnal that includes masculine, feminine, and gender-neutral images for God. And nearly 40 years ago, the National Council of Churches published a three-volume lectionary that was intentionally gender inclusive. "People don't have to reinvent the wheel," said Hunt. "They just have to use it."

Aldredge-Clanton's personal research led her to examples of gender-inclusive language throughout the Bible and Christian history. She's also expanded liturgy and hymn books to provide examples of what it looks like to incorporate inclusive language in faith communities. But despite the wealth of examples

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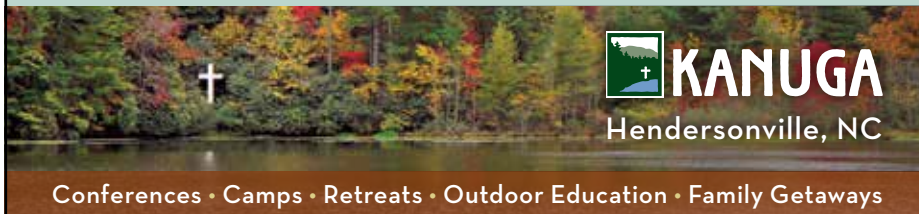


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she's discovered, she hasn't seen the church fully embrace them.

"There is still this issue against women's presence and imagery," Aldredge-Clanton said. "Male apostles are still prominent on stained glass windows, and there are pictures in the church of the Sunday school patriarchs in the Bible, but not the strong women in the Bible. There are women associates in the church, but they don't have equity."

One of the ways Aldredge-Clanton is trying to help the church embrace gender equity is through a project called Calling in the Key of She, which is developing an age-appropriate curriculum that presents female characters in the Bible in a positive light; describes God with a balance of male, female, and gender-neutral imagery; and exposes young people to models of female and male clergy in practice.

Yet while Aldredge-Clanton believes it's critical that churches adopt more inclusive language, images, and examples of leadership, she recognizes that the challenge runs deeper than vocabulary. So along with other women, she's working to develop the Lydia Project, an initiative that will give financial support to clergywomen who create new Christian communities that affirm those who have found themselves on the wrong end of racial, cultural, and gender biases. "I feel called to do this work at the theological, symbolic level but also at the pragmatic level," Aldredge-Clanton said.

FOR INDIVIDUALS AND organizations looking to eliminate gender bias, researcher Cheryl Staats recommends taking the Implicit Association Test, available for free at Harvard University's nonprofit Project Implicit website. She urges those who take the test to remember that implicit associations "don't necessarily align with some of the explicit associations we have." The point, she emphasizes, is to recognize that we have these implicit associations so "we can build newer or different associations."

It's also critical that the responsibility for confronting biases isn't left solely to those the bias most negatively affects. And when we're talking about gender, this means ensuring that men and boys are part of the solution. "We have to remember that the associations exist in [our] male counterparts as well," said Staats. "Both genders have a role to play when it comes to the dynamic." ■

Joshunda Sanders (@jvic) is a Washington, D.C.-based writer and the author of the forthcoming book How Racism and Sexism Killed Traditional Media (Praeger, 2015).

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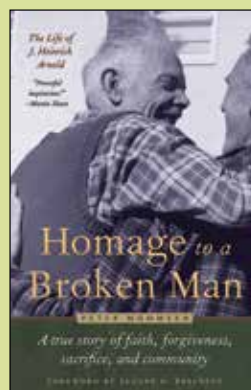
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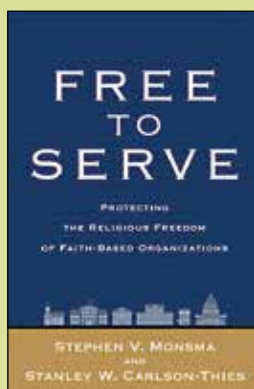
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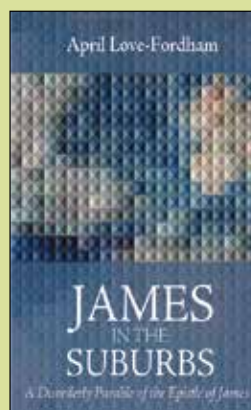
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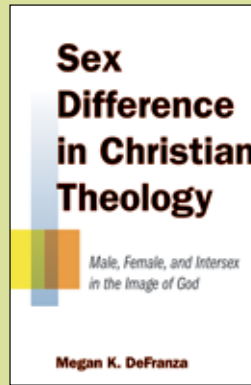
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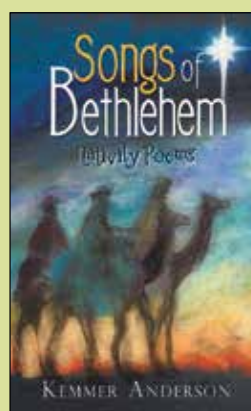
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Rewriting a Prison Sentence

Thanks to the Free Minds Book Club, incarceration isn't the last word for young inmates in Washington, D.C.

by BEATRICE M. SPADACINI

Criminal justice reform in the United States is gaining momentum with each graphic video showing fatal police abuse. In the aftermath of the many deaths of unarmed black men and women and the city-wide protests that erupted in Ferguson, Baltimore, and Cleveland, it is not surprising that presidential hopefuls are making bold public statements about the need to change a system that is profoundly unjust, overly punitive, and excessively costly to run.

At the other end of the spectrum, away from TV cameras and political wrangling, activists such as Tara Libert and Kelli Taylor, co-founders of the Free Minds Book Club and Writing Workshop, are dealing with decades of draconian anti-crime policies that have resulted in mass incarceration rates marked by racial disparities that have had a devastating impact on families and communities.

The numbers speak for themselves. Although the United States makes up less than 5 percent of the world's population, it has nearly 25 percent of its prison population. According to The Sentencing Project, a research and advocacy organization working to reform the U.S. criminal justice system, more than 2.2 million Americans are now locked up in prisons and jails across the country—a 500-percent increase over the past 30 years. Furthermore, those who are incarcerated come largely from the most disadvantaged segments of the population.

For Libert and Taylor, it all started in the mid-1990s, at the height of the so-called zero-tolerance policies on crime. As TV producers, both Libert and Taylor often reported on the criminal justice system, covering the death penalty, juvenile justice reform, and prison overcrowding. They saw firsthand the lack of educational and rehabilitative programs in prisons.

A long list of needs

In 1996, Taylor received a letter from Glen Charles McGinnis, a young inmate on death row in Texas. McGinnis wrote to ask reporters to cover the stories of young men of color sentenced to death throughout the country. McGinnis was 19 when he was found guilty of armed robbery and murder and sentenced as an adult.

Taylor produced a documentary about McGinnis, and in the process became his friend and mentor. They read the same books and discussed them through

"Your worst deeds do not have to define you."

At left, a member of the Free Minds Book Club in the D.C. Jail writes poetry.



Above, Free Minds members acting as Poet Ambassadors for violence prevention on their way to give a presentation at the University of Scranton, Pa. At right, Free Minds poet Will Avila.



letters. Despite various attempts to commute his death sentence to life in prison, McGinnis was executed in 2000. “It was so heartbreaking and tragic,” recalls Libert in a recent interview with the Catalogue for Philanthropy. “We wanted to direct our pain and powerlessness into something positive, so we started conducting a book club and writing sessions at the D.C. Jail in 2002 in Glen’s memory,” Libert said.

McGinnis often is referred to as the “original Free Minds member” because of his love for reading and writing despite dropping out of school at age 11 and having little family support. McGinnis’ story prompted Taylor and Libert to focus their work on 16- and 17-year-olds charged as adults.

What started as a volunteer activity quickly became a vocation for both, explains Taylor. “We used to go to the jail every few weeks,” explains Taylor, “but the more we went, the more it became clear that this was bigger than what we originally thought. There was a long list of unfulfilled needs this population faced.”

Touching the “untouchables”

Activist and social commentator Angela Davis wrote in her book *Are Prisons Obsolete?* that when inmates are removed from society, society quickly forgets about them. It’s a way, Davis wrote, for ordinary people to distance themselves from the “undesirables ... relieving us of the responsibility of thinking about the real issues afflicting those communities from which prisoners are drawn in such disproportionate numbers.”

Prisoners are our version of the “untouchables,” says Taylor, while recalling

how even her own educated friends sneered at her newfound vocation. Young inmates feel the social isolation even more deeply than older prisoners because they are separated from their families at a time when they need them most and have fewer coping skills to adapt to the prison environment.

The goal of Free Minds is to introduce these young inmates to the transformative power of books and creative writing. “The

The Forgiveness

By Steven

I forgive my dad for walking out on his only son
I forgive the people who think they get over
When they assume that I’m dumb
I forgive life for dealing me this hand
I forgive my inner boy for not becoming a man
I forgive the man who bumped me
Because he couldn’t see
I forgive ...
But I can’t forgive everything
Because I’ve yet to forgive me ...

Steven is an active member of the Free Minds Book Club.

idea for the book club started because I found books to be a powerful tool to connect with someone you have absolutely no history with,” says Taylor. “So we started with a book featuring a main character, Thai, who gets mixed up in the ‘street life.’ The character was someone very relatable for our young book club members. Kenji [Jasper], the author, is

an African-American young man from D.C. The fact that all the locations in the book are actual places in D.C., and are accurately described as they are in real life, was a huge draw for youth to engage in reading for the first time.”

Fast forward 13 years and Free Minds now runs the book club in the D.C. Jail twice a week, is in regular contact with more than 350 inmates each year who have been transferred to federal prisons across the country, and offers a comprehensive re-entry support program to members that go home. In 2010, Free Minds launched *On the Same Page*, a violence-prevention program in which former inmates turned Poet Ambassadors speak to middle and high school children and to community groups about the root causes of youth incarceration. “Free Minds members have not just fallen through the cracks, but have been thrown into a chasm,” says Libert. “They are so far deep below and they are crying out for help and we cannot even hear them. Part of our mission is to share their voices, the untold stories. We use the tools of poetry and their own narratives to do this.”

Turning off the “macho man” mode

“When selecting books for youths in detention, we follow the five Es rule: engage, educate, empower, escape, and expand,” Libert explains. If the youth can relate to the characters and the story, she says, they are more likely to stay engaged and to keep on reading. The hardest part, though, might be getting the young inmates to overcome their lack of trust in people and join the book club. They do so for many reasons.

“Initially it was a way to get out of my

"When I read other people's poetry I realized that we all share the same feelings, that we all make mistakes."

cell in the juvenile block," says Juan Peterson during a group discussion. "Slowly I gave in and started to write poems. I wrote about the experiences I had gone through and about my absent father. When we got feedback from people outside the jail, I was amazed how many people could relate to what I wrote."

"I read books about young men similar to myself who went on journeys from negative to positive, such as Reymundo Sanchez in *My Bloody Life: The Making of a Latin King*, and Jimmy Santiago Baca in *A Place to Stand*," says Will Avila, a Free Minds poet who spent five years in jail as a result of committing a crime while in a gang. "By talking about the books we read, I learned to share my ideas and to compromise. Everybody had their 'macho man' mode off during the time we spent in the book club."

Club members choose the books they want to read from a long list of titles that expands as they get older. Free Minds will often arrange author visits to the D.C. Jail to meet with book club members. The objective is to give them hope because, in the words of former inmate turned motivational speaker and author Shaka Senghor, "Your worst deeds do not have to define you."

Caged-in talent

Reading is the first step in expanding the mind, but writing is how the inner journey truly begins. Poetry, the group's co-founders say, has a way of breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions and getting to the raw humanity that connects all human beings. "Books and poetry are only tools, though," says Libert. "Their true power is in the connections they foster."

Avila says that reading and writing changed his perspective on life. "When I was angry or frustrated about life, instead of doing something outrageous I would start to write," he explains. "When I read other people's

poetry, I realized that we all share the same feelings, that we all make mistakes." Avila is now co-owner of Clean Decisions, a cleaning and maintenance company committed to training and hiring former inmates.

This interactive healing process is at the core of Write Nights—a community activity in which ex-convicts read poems written by their incarcerated peers to ordinary citizens.

They Call Me 299-359

By DW

Orange jumpsuit, shower shoes and armband
Guilty by appearance and judged by my race
Guilty until innocent in the words of the D.A.
Lost in a cold dream called prison
Four sharp corners, eggshell paint, dusty gray floor
No lights and a filthy toilet
No tears, just my pen in action
They call me 299-359
Correctional officers view me as a stupid savage
I push the pen so I remain happy
Mama and Daddy, these are the unspoken words of your baby's diary
My orange jumpsuit and number are only the book cover
So please don't judge
My words are pure as gold
Not aware of the success these lines hold
I operate this pen to fight the war mentality
So please understand me
They call me 299-359
Orange jumpsuit, shower shoes and an armband

DW is an active member of the Free Minds Book Club.

The audience then can give written feedback on the poems and Free Minds will deliver it to the D.C. Jail. Creating connections with the outside world, says Libert, demonstrates that someone—a stranger—cares enough to take the time to consider something they produced and write to them. And others agree that it's a powerful idea: At the Aspen Ideas Festival this summer, Free Minds received a \$25,000 first-place prize to help cities around the country implement the Write Nights program in their own communities.

"As I read the poems, I could not help but be amazed at all the talent that has been caged in," writes Kenneth, a Free Minds poet and a co-editor of the first poetry anthology published by Free Minds. "I was proud to know these young men were like me, struggling against the demon of the caged, fighting every

day to become something different—something better—something no less magnificent."

Dealing with root causes

Free Minds members speak out about the root causes of mass incarceration at congressional briefings and community events. They know firsthand the reasons why so many of their peers are either in jail or dead. A cemetery is only a few blocks away from the D.C. Jail and is visible from inside the prison.

In a report titled "The Poor Get Prison: The Alarming Spread of the Criminalization of Poverty," authors Karen Dolan and Jodi L. Carr argue there is increasing evidence that poverty and incarceration rates are inextricably linked by a system that profits from criminal charges disproportionately affecting people who are already struggling to get by.

A case in point is Ferguson, Mo. Using data from an investigation conducted by the United States Department of Justice into the Ferguson Police Department, Dolan and Carr explain that the city was "relying on fees, fines,

and court costs for 20 percent of its budget ... with a 95 percent white police force supporting itself by forcibly preying on a nearly 70 percent black population."

While there is increasing consent on prison reform thanks to initiatives such as #cut50, a bipartisan movement led by Van Jones and Newt Gingrich that seeks to reduce the incarcerated population by 50 percent over the next 10 years, what must also be tackled is the systemic racial discrimination that lands many young men of color in jail and a perverse logic that puts fund raising ahead of public safety. ■

Beatrice M. Spadacini is a freelance writer based in Silver Spring, Md. She writes about global social justice issues, human rights, and health.

Shelter in the Storm

Can the church community truly become a safe space—for discussion, for reporting, for healing—for survivors of trauma?

by **SANDI VILLARREAL**

AN IRAQ WAR VETERAN passes the offering plate after listening to a sermon on Christian persecution in the early church—tales of torture and execution. A 19-year-old student—home for the summer from college, where her first experience at a fraternity party turned violent—listens to her childhood pastor recite the story of David and Bathsheba and David's subsequent path to redemption. A mother placates her two children with Cheerios and raisins as she struggles through the exhortations to spousal submission, hiding bruised arms under long sleeves in the middle of July.

The Christian story is littered with trauma—from slavery (the Israelites in Egypt) to sexual assault and abuse (Dinah, Tamar, Bathsheba) to the trauma of war (see: much of the Old Testament) to, of course, the crucifixion of Jesus and martyrdom of his disciples.

There is possibly no better resource for understanding the implications of and need for healing from trauma than faith communities pointing to the cross and Jesus' answer to violence. Both the need and the opportunity are great. But perhaps too often Christians proclaim the message of Easter—victory and restoration—while skipping past the violence and trauma of Good Friday. Some theologies explain away that violence as a necessary component of ultimate salvation—but *let's get to the salvation part, okay?*—leaving survivors of trauma who fill our Sunday pews without

a touchstone for healing within the very communities that purport to be safe spaces.

"There's this sense that, as Christians, we are familiar with death. ... We aren't very good at lingering with people in the place where death and life intersect," said Rachael Anne Clinton, a pastor, teacher, and trauma specialist at The Allender Center at The Seattle School of Theology and Psychology.

However, according to Clinton, there is a growing awareness of the interplay between those more troubling bits of biblical text and how churches and clergy are learning to serve the whole human person. The Allender Center focuses on trauma, which includes studying the brain and body holistically, and instructs counselors on how to effectively engage survivors' stories of trauma in a way that honors the image of God in each person. Clinton said many students—both in their counseling and master of divinity programs—are coming to The Seattle School because they want to critically engage on issues of trauma and aren't necessarily finding the tools within their own seminaries or faith institutions.

Bethany Bylsma is one of them. A master's candidate studying counseling psychology, Bylsma says some of that breakdown happens because of a more general misunderstanding of trauma and mental health.

"The church needs to face mental health as an issue that can be addressed and isn't a matter of not praying enough about

The role of faith communities in addressing partner violence is essential.



it," Bylsma said. "The reasons our minds work the way they do is because of the trauma they've experienced."

The vocation of pastoral care

For Clinton, the root of that misunderstanding lies in how denominational institutions have been structured since the Enlightenment. "The primary vocation for the pastor became teaching. Doctrine became the driving force of what would hold Christianity together," Clinton said. Thus, seminaries focused on building a huge base of knowledge so clergy could go forth and preach the truth. "There was this move away from pastoral care and from the primary vocation for the pastor being a shepherd."

Clinton says the shift was amplified by theologies crafted within very particular contexts. "Theology doesn't happen within a vacuum; it has its own biases."

Understanding that most atonement metaphors come out of a penal context perhaps allows for a different interpretation of the violence of the cross—one that doesn't elevate victimization as holy. For pastors who have not experienced domestic violence or abuse, recognizing that their own experience marks a certain kind of privilege is an important step in finding a language that encourages safe space.

According to Clinton, the disconnect between doctrine and teaching vs. pastoral care as vocation persists in part because of the stigma around psychology and a perception that responses to trauma are purely "emotional"—and are thus difficult to address in a consistent way. But advocates point to a steady stream of research that could begin to bridge the perception gap for some by concretely connecting body and mind and responses to trauma, particularly around traumatic brain injury. TBI is most commonly referenced in connection with head trauma experienced by war veterans and professional football players. But one advocate who works on concussion issues calculated that as many as 20 million women each year could have TBI caused by domestic violence.

A change in best practices

With more and more research that makes connections between trauma, mental health, and behavior, there is hope for a more common understanding in all



"I want survivors to know this is not a journey they have to take alone."

—Jen Luettel Schweer, Georgetown University

communities—including those of faith. "It's a less intimidating way to begin to understand the impact of trauma on the brain and therefore the body," Clinton said.

Jen Luettel Schweer, licensed counselor and associate director of sexual assault response and prevention services at Georgetown University, said the law enforcement community is already implementing new practices in response to such research—including giving victims two sleep cycles before doing in-depth interviews because of how the brain processes trauma; understanding "Swiss cheese" memory, when there are gaps in the trauma narrative; and realizing that often survivors will remember details out of order.

Understanding the nuances of trauma could help pastors lean into the responsibility of fully caring for those experiencing it within their communities. But first they need to overcome a common fear of taking the first step—a fear of saying the wrong thing.

"It feels very scary to think about someone in your faith community who has experienced this or who has done this," Schweer said. "And then we really don't have any framework because it's not something that's integrated into schools or that's a common conversation or common language."

For Schweer, it begins with actively

forming relationships between advocates and faith communities and "showing up in the same spaces together." While data from a 2014 Sojourners survey of Protestant pastors show that only 43 percent of pastors are familiar with sexual and domestic violence resources in their communities, 81 percent said they would do more if they had training and resources. It starts with *seeking out* those resources with the knowledge that they will be necessary—in light of sobering statistics that 20 people per minute are the victims of physical violence by an intimate partner in the U.S., according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Those victims are friends and neighbors in our communities, our schools—our pews.

Faith groups are 'absolutely critical'

Advocacy groups, first responders, public health programs, and many others invest in addressing the epidemic of gender-based and intimate partner violence. But, as made explicit by experts in the field at a roundtable discussion earlier this year at Georgetown's Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, the role of faith communities in addressing the issue is essential.

"The relationship between advocacy agencies and all of the folks supporting survivors in communities and the connection with religious and faith-based spaces is absolutely critical," Laura Kovach, director of Georgetown's Women's Center, said at the gathering. "We cannot provide comprehensive care to survivors without our religious communities and institutions."

Indeed, there have been some data that indicate the shared social interaction of religious communities can actually serve to mitigate the loss of trust experienced by survivors of sexual assault. A report this year on research conducted at Baylor University makes a lofty claim: that religion can help sexual assault survivors "cope and overcome the emotional damage."

"It's not just about [church] attendance,

but about being embedded in a religious social network and about that being a part of your identity,” researcher Jeffrey Tamburello said in the report.

Schweer says that identity piece is essential for counseling survivors of trauma.

“One of the first things we do as counselors and advocates is we ask ‘what is your support system?’ ... For many of our students, a spiritual component is present with that,” Schweer said. “If we’re doing our jobs well and correctly as advocates and counselors who do interpersonal violence work, we are figuring out how to help them integrate that in a way that’s helpful to them.” For example, if going to Mass feels like a safe space for a particular survivor, Schweer says, a good advocate will ensure that attendance is part of a plan for coping with stress and healing.

Equipping ourselves to address trauma

But along with that essential role in the healing process comes the responsibility on the part of the pastor and faith community to address trauma and survivors of trauma with care and respect. Beyond providing references to advocates in times of crisis, faith leaders should be properly equipping themselves with the tools to address trauma theologically.

According to the Sojourners survey, two-thirds of pastors speak once or less per year about sexual or domestic violence. But there’s no shortage of material to do so appropriately and in an integrated way.

“Fortunately and unfortunately our text

is full of stories that are very complex and sometimes hard to read and look at,” Clinton said. “For me as a pastor, that’s where I always encourage pastors to start.”

We Will Speak Out has a sermon guide, developed by health experts at IMA World Health and ordained ministers, that includes educational resources and sample sermons. Sojourners has published “I Believe You: Sexual Violence and the Church,” an e-book for small groups to engage and offer space for discussion and story sharing.

Clinton said that pastors should move beyond presenting those liturgical texts and discussion guides in a simply informational way. Create space for people to respond. Engage texts such as Lamentations and Psalms to allow for some reflection within that space.

When in doubt, seek additional education or training: Some seminaries and institutions such as The Seattle School offer lay certificates in counseling. Read about the intersection of theology and trauma, about the effects of trauma on the brain, and about how to use a better common language.

And finally, reinforce the notion that the church community is in fact a safe space—for discussion, for reporting, for healing. Critiques abound of both faith communities and college campuses—once considered havens where survivors could thrive and feel safe—in how they address or don’t address trauma, particularly sexual assault and abuse. And while very often these are valid sources of accountability, the sudden upswing in attention has the potential for negative effects.

“I want survivors in all of this [to know] that there are people who support them,” Schweer said. “I also want survivors to know that if this happens to them, it’s not a hopeless situation, and there are services like ours and there are people in the community, and this is not a journey they have to take alone.”

If there is ever a place for survivors of violence to know they are not on their journey alone, it should be within communities of faith, embraced by the love of a God who has walked it before. ■

Sandi Villarreal is web editor and chief digital officer for Sojourners.

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RESOURCES FOR HEALING

■ **The Body Keeps the Score:** *Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*, by Bessel van der Kolk

■ **Trauma and Grace:** *Theology in a Ruptured World*, by Serene Jones

■ **The Wounded Heart:** *Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse*, by Dan B. Allender

■ **The Healing Path:** *How the Hurts in Your Past Can Lead You to a More Abundant Life*, by Dan B. Allender (a gentle primer for those who have little experience thinking or talking about trauma)

■ **The Allender Center Podcast** includes several episodes on the church and trauma.

—Compiled by Rachael Anne Clinton, a member of The Allender Center teaching staff



Detail from Picasso's
"Weeping Woman With
Red Hat," one of several
paintings to which Israeli
poet Tuvia Ruebner has
responded in verse.

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An interview with
Pope Francis

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Dale Hanson Bourke on
*The Born Free*s

45 An Inheritance of Scars
Lani Prunés reviews
God Help the Child

By Robert Hirschfield

The Living and the **Unforgotten**

Tuvia Ruebner is one of Israel's poets of witness.

My eyes have seen too much.

Too many nations have overwhelmed my spirit.

TUVIA RUEBNER HAS earned the lament he wrote for King David, Israel's better-known sorrow bearer. The poet came into the world 91 years ago in Pressburg-Bratislava, Slovakia, under Nazism's shadow. It is a shadow he managed to separate himself from physically, but which sticks to him

philosophically and is at the core of his poetry. The parched sound of random loss is the root sound in many of his poems. The spawn of an unimaginable yesterday, Tuvia Ruebner is more than anything a poet of today.

His parents, his grandparents, and his little sister Litzl all perished at Auschwitz in 1942, a year after he immigrated to British Mandate Palestine. Forty years after their deaths, Ruebner's first son, Moran, was sent to fight in Israel's first Lebanese war. Moran left for South America the following year, estranged from his country and its wars, and after a few letters, was never heard from again.

In Ruebner's poem "[My father was murdered]," one by one he enumerates his losses:

Moran is missing

eighteen years.

Eighteen years

Moran has been missing.

Inconceivable!

Reminiscent of King David's lament for his dead and treacherous son, Absalom (Ruebner's poetry is dotted with variations on biblical themes), his words could easily resonate with a father in a Somali village lamenting his son missing at sea, or in some distant land.

In *the Illuminated Dark: Selected Poems of Tuvia Ruebner*, published collaboratively last year by the University of Pittsburgh Press and the Hebrew Union College Press, is Ruebner's first book of poetry translated into English. He has not had the recognition in the U.S. accorded other major Israeli poets

such as Yehuda Amichai, Dahlia Ravikovitch, Yona Wallach, and Aharon Shabtai.

His translator, the poet Rachel Tzvia Back, explains that Ruebner has always been a somewhat marginalized figure in Israeli poetry. For the first 12 years in his new country, he wrote in German, not Hebrew, which

he only began writing at age 29. In contrast, Ravikovitch, Wallach, and Shabtai were all native-born Israelis. Amichai came over with his family at age 12 from Germany to escape Hitler. Unlike these other key poets, Ruebner roots his work in the Holocaust experience, not in the Israeli experience. (Back asserts that even in Ruebner's youth, even when he

chose to make his life among Zionists, he himself was not a Zionist, but an escapee from anti-Semitism.)

A longtime resident of Kibbutz Merhavim in the Galilee with his pianist wife, Galila, Ruebner manages to write as a Jewish exile while being part of the Jewish state.

I was abandoned.

The train traveled on and on and on.

It swallowed up countries one two three.

It was full of foreboding.

Nothing was left of me but my body and my face.

—“Abandoned”

A compelling poetry emerges from one who feels himself stateless in a place obsessed with maintaining the multifaceted machinery of a state. Like Ravikovitch, who also inhabited Israel's margins, Ruebner opposes the occupation of Palestinian territory. His poem “Voices (2),” set at a West Bank roadblock, begins:

The prisoner

His hands are bound.

His legs are bound.

The single shot scatters all the birds.



Israeli poet
Tuvia Ruebner

New & Noteworthy



From the film *Know How*

RAISING THEMSELVES

The film *Know How*, a musical written and acted by foster-care youth, tells interwoven stories of coming of age within a dysfunctional system, the losses and dangers these young people face, and their against-the-odds struggle to persevere. First Run Features

BEYOND THE FOOD DRIVE

In *Charity Detox: What Charity Would Look Like If We Cared About Results*, Robert D. Lupton asserts that poverty must be addressed “through development, not through one-way giving.” With anecdotes and examples, he explains development strategies such as fund reallocation, reciprocal exchange models, and neighborhood reconciliation. Harper One

SUNDAY CANDY

Donnie Trumpet and the Social Experiment's debut album *Surf* is pop ambitiously occupied by jazz, funk, and rap moments, and filled with equally ambitious lyrics by Chance the Rapper about a romantic Eucharist, the miracle of life, and the too-short lives of black kids. Self-released

LEARNING FOR LIFE

When disaster looms, helping students both know the facts and imagine solutions is vital. *A People's Curriculum for the Earth: Teaching Climate Change and the Environmental Crisis* offers more than 400 pages of articles, role plays, stories, poems, graphics, and other resources to help educators and learners creatively engage. www.rethinkingschools.org

Continued on Page 41

The late bluesman
B.B. King, with Lucille



Shutterstock

Singing the People's Blues

THE DEATH of B.B. King this spring was marked by an outpouring of homage appropriate to the man's talent, his influence on U.S. culture, and his fabled personal humility and generosity.

He started out picking cotton and singing on the street and ended as one of the most famous and honored men on earth—a classic rags-to-riches tale. But King wasn't just a black Horatio Alger. And his story wasn't just one of individual striving and achievement. King also understood that his art was rooted in the

you well," you knew you were hearing the last words of a dying man.

King was a virtuoso guitarist and a powerful singer. He wasn't my favorite bluesman, but he became the one I most respected. That's because, beginning in 1973, B.B. King came back to Mississippi in June every year to headline a free concert honoring Medgar Evers, the Mississippi civil rights leader who was assassinated by a white supremacist on June 12, 1963.

Eventually, King expanded his annual homecoming to include another free concert in his hometown of Indianola. But it was those early Evers tribute shows that demonstrated what the man was really about. Honoring Evers doesn't seem like such a big deal today. After all the Jackson, Miss., airport is named for Evers and the major Jackson thoroughfare that runs closest to Evers' home is called Medgar Evers Boulevard. Evers' assassin, Byron De La Beckwith, died in prison in 2001, having been finally convicted of the crime in 1994.

But in June 1973, the wounds of the previous decade were still fresh. Most public schools in Mississippi weren't

integrated until 1970. Arch-segregationist James O. Eastland had just been re-elected to another term in the U.S. Senate. Beckwith was still a free man, though he was arrested later that year in New Orleans on his way to bomb the home of a prominent Jewish leader.

B.B. King didn't come home to Mississippi just to "give back" philanthropically (although he did plenty of that). With those Medgar Evers concerts, he honored the sacrifice of a man who led a campaign of nonviolent civil disobedience aimed at disrupting the political and economic power structure of the state. King did that year after year for four decades.

And at every one of those shows I saw, he played a song he'd co-written in 1969 that became his statement of purpose. Called "Why I Sing the Blues," it begins, "When I first got the blues / they brought me over here on a ship / men standing over me / and a lot more with a whip / and everybody wants to know / why I sing the blues. ... I've been around a long time / people, I've really, really paid my dues." ■

Danny Duncan Collum teaches writing at Kentucky State University in Frankfort. He is the author of the novel White Boy.

B.B. King didn't come home to Mississippi just to "give back" philanthropically.

collective struggle of his people and that he was a part of that struggle.

I grew up about 30 miles from B.B. King's Sunflower County, Miss., home, but I discovered him the same way most white people my age did, by hearing "The Thrill Is Gone" on the radio. It's a recording that still jumps out of the speakers and grabs the heart. It starts with a mournful guitar melody. Then, behind verse two, an eerie, quavering wash of strings begins low in the mix and rises through the rest of the song. By the time King wails out to his lover, "I'm free from your spell, and now that it's all over, all I can do is wish



Continued from Page 39

*It's hard to bear.
The sun is a scorching stone.
The shade is too narrow.*

*Why is she being pushed, pushing?
In labor? Is that possible?
Is there anyone here?
How can this be?*

If Ruebner's work lacks Amichai's lightness and gentle irony, it is often companionable in its darkness, which he breaks

"Shame? History asks in wonder. Never heard of it."

open for you like a father breaking open an orange for his son. The orange he serves up in the poem "History" may be dark, but it has the taste of truth.

*Like a good western, It loves its piles of dead.
Victims and more victims, It demands, without them*

how will I glorify the Victors.

Are there victors? you ask, and fall silent.

He who survives is the hero. And he who

helped him survive,

his name will be lost with the wind that

cools the heat

crouching over the battle-field.

Shame? History asks in wonder. Never heard of it.

When Ruebner sets aside the stone of history and writes about poetry, he becomes a man who kicks off his heavy boots to write in his bare feet. "Poem," a late work, opens with these lines:

*But now green has been created
and it is good, it is good.*

*A wagtail in its grey coat and yellow vest
nods its tail in agreement
as the prancing bird on picket posts
has returned and will return yet again.*

In "Poetry's Soliloquy" he turns his wonder on the art of poetry itself:

*How pleasant is the moderate and flexible
voice of long lines*

In his poetry Ruebner has created a



From Inside Out

FEEDING THE INNER LIFE

THE TEACHER Edwin Friedman believed that good leadership creates conditions for people to find tools to become emotionally mature. In other words, no matter what its stated goal (civil rights, community organizing, religious engagement), the most important purpose of leadership is to help us become more fully human.

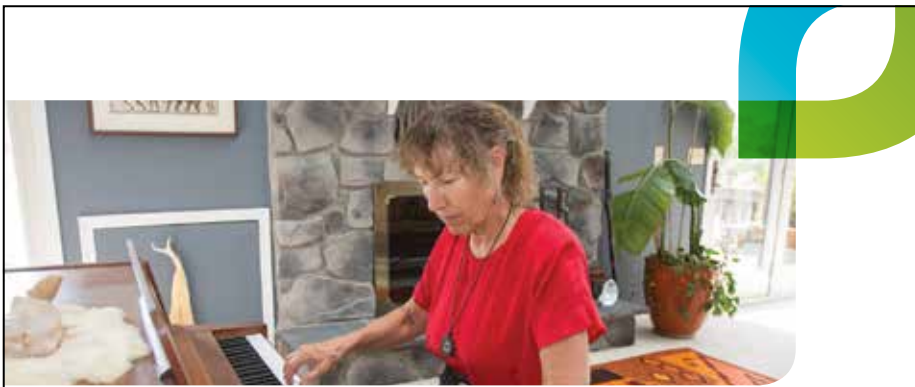
Of course this is also true for artistic endeavors—stories that create emotional dependency in audience members are not offering good leadership, and they usually make for bad art too. We may like them, as they satisfy the surface-level desire for easily grasped narratives and quick resolution. But that's the aesthetic equivalent of a cheap burger. Our deeper hunger is for stories that strive to tell the truth about life and its possibilities, that demand self-reflection, and that permit subtexts to breathe so we can fill in the gaps.

I saw three such films recently. **Inside Out** displays astonishing imagination, bringing us into the human psyche to figure out how we think. There's genius in a story that gives the five core emotions personalities, wisdom in how it makes honest work of how people confront change, and a delightful bonus in the form of Bing Bong, a character with all the loveliness of Baloo the Bear and a purpose with which Carl Jung would be pleased. *Inside Out* offers no shortcuts to spiritual well-being. It's film-as-therapy that's as entertaining for kids as it is wise for adults (and vice versa).

Love & Mercy unfolds Brian Wilson's exquisite imagination and explores the source of the Beach Boys' best sounds (with the richest performances John Cusack and Paul Dano have ever given). Wilson's lifelong struggle with the psychological effects of trauma is portrayed with uncommon sensitivity. This may be one of the most accurate depictions of mental torment cinema has brought us (a daydream/nightmare sequence in which Wilson appears to himself as three different versions of his persona is as evocative as anything in *Requiem for a Dream* or *Raging Bull*).

And the wise and humane real-world fantasy **The Fisher King** wants nothing less than to heal the audience. A perfect cast—Robin Williams, Jeff Bridges, Mercedes Ruehl, and Amanda Plummer—dance with each other around a Grail myth and illuminate the stages of a contemporary hero's journey. It has just been released on DVD and Blu-Ray in a gorgeous restoration; it's a beautiful, touching, and psychologically resonant operetta about broken people fixing each other because there's nothing more important than love. As with the best leadership, it could help you find good things within yourself you didn't know were there. ■

Gareth Higgins is a northern Irish writer based in North Carolina. www.garethhiggins.net



After breaking her arm ice skating, Barbara Stone of Millersburg, Ohio, said, "I am SO GLAD that I had health insurance. It was enough dealing with the pain and temporary disability."

She almost didn't buy the insurance when she was turning 65. After all, she was in perfect health.

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country that joins the unforgotten dead with what came next. It is a country that deserves to be better known. A country in which he himself is both citizen and stranger. From "Voices":

I am walking. I am always walking. Where am I walking? I am not here.

In his walking, questions follow questions. Big questions. The kinds of questions poetry used to be known for asking.

1.

Listen, this is a human being, this.

_Yes, maybe

_Maybe not?

_Who knows.

2.

Become smaller and smaller, roll yourself

Into a ball! Who will know you now?

After all, you are no longer you.

—"Footnotes to the Book of Job"

But the poet's skepticism about life coexists in dour abiding with his affirmation of life. In the final section of *In the Illuminated Dark*, titled "Last Ones," his poem "With Day Breaking" sounds as if it might have come from his second son, Idan, a Buddhist monk in Nepal:

*With day breaking in sunlight over the hills
and the Gilboa mountain rising from morning
mists as if it were the Annapurna
and the valley revealing itself all at once in
its full spring beauty
and me sitting here and listening to the
chaconne from Bach's second partita
and gate after gate opening with no guard
worse than his predecessor at the
entrance
slowly I shed all ill-will and human cruelties
a kind of compassion taking their place—
compassion for all that exists ■*

Robert Hirschfield is a New York City-based freelance writer. A second collection of Ruebner's poetry in English, *Late Beauty*, translated by Lisa Katz and Shahar Bram, is forthcoming from Zephyr Press.



POPE FRANCIS ON CAPITALISM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

SINCE HIS ELECTION IN 2013, Pope Francis has been widely praised. But in this interview, conducted by Italian journalists Andrea Tornielli and Giacomo Galeazzi before the release of the encyclical “*Laudato Si*,” Pope Francis speaks about the environment and economic justice; his perspectives on these topics have elicited harsh criticism from some.

How important is it for Christians to recover a sense of care for creation and sustainable development? And how do we ensure that this is not confused with a certain environmentalist ideology that considers humanity the real threat for the well-being of our planet?

POPE FRANCIS: For the protection of creation we must overcome the culture of waste. Creation is the gift that God has given to humanity so it can be protected, cultivated, used for our livelihood, and handed over to future generations. The vocation to take care of someone or something is human, before being Christian, and affects all; we are called to care for creation, its beauty, and to respect all creatures of God and the environment in which we live. If we fail in this responsibility, if we do not take care of our brothers and sisters and of all creation, destruction will advance. Unfortunately, we must remember that every period of history has its own “Herods” who destroy, plot schemes of death, disfigure the face of man and woman, destroying creation.

But when humanity, instead of being custodian, considers itself to be the master, it ... moves toward destruction. Consider nuclear weapons and the possibility to annihilate in a few moments a huge number of people. Think about those who restore the tower of Babel and destroy creation. This attitude leads humanity to commit a new sin against God the Creator.

The real protection of creation has nothing to do with ideologies that consider humanity an accident, or a problem to be eliminated. God has placed men and women at the apex of creation, and has entrusted them with the earth. The design of God the Creator is inscribed in nature.

In your opinion, why do Pius XI's strong and prophetic words against the international imperialism of money in his encyclical *Quadragesimo Anno* [1931] sound to many—even Catholics—exaggerated and radical today?

Pius XI seems exaggerated only to those who feel struck by his words and hit where it hurts by his prophetic condemnations. But Pius XI was not exaggerating. He only told the truth after the economic and financial crisis of 1929, and, as a good mountaineer, he saw things as they were; he could look ahead. I am afraid that the only ones

who are exaggerating are the ones who still feel called into question by Pius XI's reproaches.

***Populorum Progressio* [a 1967 encyclical by Pope Paul VI], states that private property is not an absolute right but is subject to the common good, and according to *Catechism of Saint Pius X* [1908], the sins that cry to Heaven for vengeance are the oppression of the poor and defrauding workers of their just wages. Are these claims still valid today?**

Not only are they still valid, but the more time goes on, the more I find that they have been proven by experience.

Because of some passages of the exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium*, a critic from the United States has accused you of being a Marxist. How did it feel to be considered a follower of Karl Marx?

I have met many Marxists in my life who are good people, so I don't feel offended by these comments. But Marxist ideology is wrong.

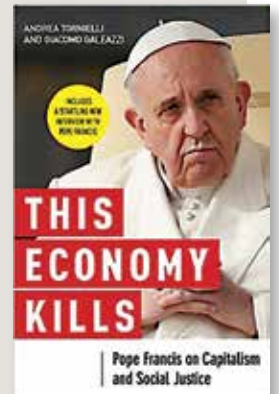
The sentence of *Evangelii Gaudium* that most struck a chord was the one about an economy that “kills.”

And yet, in the exhortation I did not say anything that is not already in the teachings of the social doctrine of the Church. Also, I didn't speak from a technical point of view. I simply tried to present a picture of what happens. The only specific reference was to the so-called “trickle-down” economic theories, according to which every economic growth, encouraged by a free market, will inevitably bring about greater equity and global inclusiveness. The promise was that, when the glass was full, it would have flowed over and the poor would have benefited from it. Instead, what happens is that when the glass is full it

mysteriously gets larger, and so nothing ever comes out of it for the poor. This was the only reference to a specific theory.

I repeat, I do not speak as an economics expert, but according to the social doctrine of the Church. And this does not mean that I am a Marxist. Perhaps whoever has made this comment does not know the social doctrine of the Church and, apparently, does not even know Marxism all that well either. ■

Excerpted from This Economy Kills: Pope Francis on Capitalism and Social Justice, by Andrea Tornielli and Giacomo Galeazzi. Liturgical Press, 2015.



‘When the glass is full it mysteriously gets larger, and so nothing ever comes out of it for the poor.’

—Pope Francis



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CultureWatch

BOOKS ART MUSIC FILM

Reviewed by Dale Hanson Bourke

YOUNG WOMEN RISING

***The Born Frees: Writing with the Girls of Gugulethu*, by Kimberly Burge. W.W. Norton & Company.**

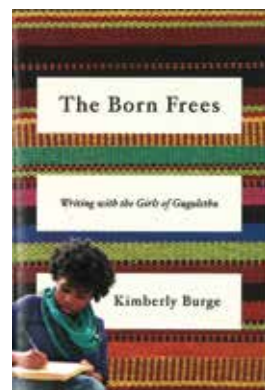
FOR NON-WHITES

born in post-apartheid South Africa, the country promised equal rights and legal freedom. But the first generation of “born frees,” as they are called, also entered a world where HIV/AIDS was destroying their families and communities. Many children and teens were left largely fending for themselves in townships plagued by poverty, disease, and violence.

Author Kimberly Burge, a *Sojourners* contributing writer, entered this world not as an aid or social worker, but rather on a Fulbright scholarship, to form a writing group for adolescent girls in the township of Gugulethu. Too old for the child-centered programs and too young for adult assistance, the girls were falling through the cracks of established programs. The writing club offered them the opportunity to creatively express their fears, frustrations, and dreams.

To Burge’s credit, the book is not primarily about her or her experiences. She keeps the focus on the girls themselves and the often breathtaking words and thoughts they express in their writing. Burge is not there to rescue them, but rather to help them find their voices. She acts less as a teacher than a peer, encouraging girls to lead the group themselves and prompting them to write about such topics as “I wish I could ...” or “I need to find a place ...”

The group, self-named Amazw’Entombi or Voices of the Girls, becomes a safe place for the girls to gather weekly, sharing their writings and building friendships. Most have lost at least one parent; some are living with relatives who offer a roof but no nurture or encouragement. As Burge befriends the girls, she learns their



often-heartbreaking stories. One is living with HIV after being repeatedly raped by an uncle when she was just 7 or 8 years old. Another is trying to graduate from high school but has to make up for poor schooling and a disrupted living situation. Others are beaten by boyfriends or mistreated by relatives.

Despite their circumstances, the girls often write about hopes and dreams.

Asked to imagine herself 25 years in the future, a girl named Sharon writes: "I see the ocean from my balcony. I see peace and tranquility. I see me being beautiful, free, and living. ... In my future, I look at myself in my mirror and love what I see."

Burge skillfully provides context for the girls' stories without breaking the narrative rhythm. She explains the prevalence of gender-based violence and the insidious impact of HIV/AIDS.

Beautifully written, *The Born Frees* offers a glimpse into present-day South Africa and the post-apartheid challenges, but mostly introduces us to the voices of courage, strength, and hope of girls who rise above almost unimaginable circumstances. When

***The Born Frees* introduces us to girls who rise above almost unimaginable circumstances.**

Burge's scholarship ends, she must return to the U.S., but two years later she goes back to Gugulethu for a reunion with the group where she asks the girls to reflect on what the group meant to them. Ntombizanele writes:

Amazw'Entombi gave me space and encouraged me to find my voice, to write about what it means being intombazana [a girl], growing up in the township of Gugulethu in need of direction and inspiration ... It's a place I learnt to love my God-given husky voice and mostly it's a place I learnt how it felt and what it meant to be listened to.

As Burge herself reflects on the experience, she steps back from the cliché of giving "voice to the voiceless." Instead she says, "These young women have always had voices. They just needed to be prompted, to have the questions asked, and for the rest of

us to have ears to hear, and the good sense to listen to them." This uplifting book gives us all a chance to listen. ■

Dale Hanson Bourke is author of 11 books, including Responding to HIV/AIDS, and editor of PracticingFaith.com.

Reviewed by Lani Prunés

AN INHERITANCE OF SCARS

***God Help the Child*, by Toni Morrison. Knopf.**

"WHAT YOU do to children matters. And they may never forget."

This thread runs aggressively through Toni Morrison's most recent novel, *God Help the Child*. The speaker is Sweetness, a woman who shares her family's wounds from trying to pass for white, or "high-yellow," for generations. Of trying to blend in well enough to drink at fountains, to try on hats in stores, to use the same Bible as whites during ceremonies. When her child and the novel's focus, Bride, is born black, "midnight black, Sudanese black ... blue-black," all the advancement Sweetness and her ancestors strove for dies. She loses her husband (who assumes she has been unfaithful), her social standing as a light-skinned woman, and any love for her child. "Her color is a cross she will always carry," Sweetness says. "But it's not my fault. It's not my fault. It's not my fault. It's not."

Bride grows up without the love of a mother's touch and scorned for being so oddly dark, until she learns to use her color to make herself exotic and marketable. What may seem to be a character living into her identity as a black woman is really a façade in order to regain what was lost because of her skin. Of course, what Bride sees as progress is actually proof that she too has fallen into Sweetness' obsession with what Morrison described in a recent NPR interview as "skin privilege—the ranking of color in terms of its closeness to white people or white-skinned people and its devaluation according to how dark one is and the impact that has on people who are dedicated to the privileges of certain levels of skin color." But while race and color as

DO JUSTICE

Micah 6:8 CEB

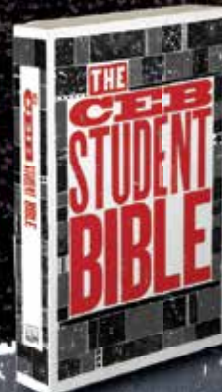


YOUNG PEOPLE CARE

about serving God through their actions, helping the community around them. Eighty-four percent of the teens we surveyed* said that learning about a problem in the world motivates them to change the way they live and express their faith.

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*2012 YTI Survey

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A Pilgrimage of Just Peace

• Rejecting Cruelty • Creating Community • Rediscovering Divinity

Dr. Fernando Enns, WCC Central Committee; VU University Amsterdam	Dr. Elizabeth Ferris, Project on Internal Displacement, Brookings Institution	Dr. James S. Logan, Religion and African and African American Studies, Earlham College	Dr. Sharon E. Watkins, General Minister and President, Christian Church
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social constructs are themes in the book, they are not explored as deeply or given as much emphasis as childhood trauma.

As in some of Morrison's other novels, magical realism conveys the battle between the past and the present, the spiritual and the physical, playing a poignant, visceral part in Bride's journey. Bride goes through a literal metamorphosis, assuming it is penance for gruesome choices she made as a child to feel alive and as an adult to feel powerful. She is numbed to what true progress and success are, constantly trying to put a fragmented

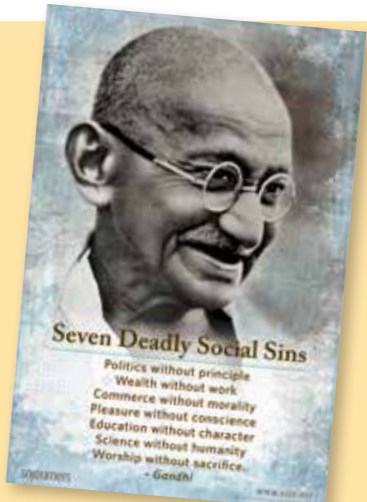
'It's not my fault. It's not my fault. It's not.'

identity together until she can no longer get up and must face her trauma and changing body.

The only people in the novel who allow themselves to truly heal are a child named Rain and an ex-convict named Sofia. They speak to the power of self-forgiveness. Too often we carry the shame and hate handed to us by other people's evil, whether from childhood trauma and abuse or complacency and apathy as adults. While we can and must be held accountable for our own mistakes, we must also be willing to take off the shroud of self-loathing and guilt, and move forward past trauma into self-acceptance and healing. Both Rain and Sofia, young and old, can see the power of blame and regret and refuse to walk that path, while Bride, her lover Booker, and her mother Sweetness will arguably always drag the sins of their forebears behind them.

"What you do to children matters. And they may never forget." Despite her off-putting and futile bitterness, and general ignorance of her involvement in Bride's tragic flaws, Sweetness' words hold true. The trauma we are born into or that is branded upon us is a burden we carry no matter how much we deal with it. It has repercussions we did not ask for that aren't easily dismissed. How we choose to carry this trauma is what sets us apart; according to *God Help the Child*, acceptance is the first step. ■

Lani Prunés is an editorial assistant at Sojourners.



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The Stillwater

—Montana

Lay me down, oh lay me down bankside—
scratched by the blue wildrye, I hear the freshet-rush
of the river drunk on winter's waters, what lie
it makes of a hushed name.

In spring the waters animate and air-infuse
to a sea-like green, the bounty verging on a flood:
cataract and water-flare between two banks.
Will they hold again some softness, if not between,
then leastways on their rarer mossy slopes?
Does wavelike sweetgrass come, or just these spikes,
grasses better named for tail or brush?

When softness? as if that's grace itself,
and all that grace will bring. Oh lay me down
or lead me there, to banks of waters solemn-hushed,
to waters still and home.

Geri Doran teaches in the creative writing program at the University of Oregon in Eugene. Her most recent collection is Sanderlings.

FAITHFUL LOVE

Micah 6:8 CEB



THIS BIBLE IS AN INVITATION, and we hope you accept it. The many people who worked on this project believe young people are not just leaders for the future but prophets for the present, with unique insights and perspectives. We want you to deepen your understanding of scripture because you can teach us and help us all love God and neighbor more deeply.

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The 'Drum Major Instinct'

THE LECTIONARY PASSAGES for these weeks of Pentecost make the season come alive. Why? Because who doesn't light up at receiving gifts? We humans are pretty good at giving gifts—Christmas, birthdays, graduations. Yet our giving pales in comparison to that of the Holy Spirit. Usually we give because we expect something in return. The Holy Spirit gives freely and abundantly out of unending love and grace. These scriptures tell of the Holy Spirit giving us all we will need to lead God's people: happiness, tongues, humility, and boldness. And yet we'll also get *more* than we need: The Holy Spirit both gives and empowers.

For the work ahead, we will certainly need a power that goes beyond ourselves—unless we are satisfied with half-baked sermons, timid leadership, and time-bound visions. In case this sounds like your grandmother's preacher on the "fruits of the spirit," remember that the Spirit put on display in these verses is the prophetic, justice-loving, reconciliation-seeking third person of the Trinity who anointed Jesus with his mission. His was a mission "to bring good news to the poor ... to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let

the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" (Luke 4:18b-19). What a politically theological imagination, capable of transforming the world! It's the same one the Holy Spirit gives to us today through the church for the world. That's a gift worth dying for. Holy Spirit come, come quickly!



Brandon Wrencher is pastor of Blackburns' Chapel United Methodist Church and director of The Blackburn House in Todd, N.C.

[SEPTEMBER 6]

Love Among the Free

Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23; Psalm 146; James 2:1-17; Mark 7:24-37

THOSE WHO PORTRAY justice-seeking as a vocation of "grit and bear it" must have missed the Hebrew Bible. That we are to work for justice is dogma. The disposition in which we do it is another matter. Our readings from Proverbs and the psalm leave no room for misunderstanding: happy are those that seek justice (Proverbs 22:9; Psalm 146:5-7). Yet the work of justice to which we are called is fraught with complexity and misunderstanding. We work with people and as people, after all, not just as systems and principalities. People! This means that despite our justice-loving selves, the systems of injustice and exclusion we fight so hard to dismantle "out there" find their way inside of us. To resist this, the finely dressed must do the serving; the guy with the odor and hole in his sneakers must be the one to receive. Scripture calls our propensity for basing our identities on social distinctions for what it is: "evil" (James 2:4). The example of the Syrophoenician woman stands out. That she claims the racial slur of "dog" for herself shows that, even in the presence

of Jesus, her internalized racism persists (Mark 7:27-28).

How do we make sense out of these distinctions since God is indeed "the maker of ... all" (Proverbs 22:2b)? It's enough to squelch anyone's joy. Howard Thurman writes in *Jesus and the Disinherited*: "an attack [must be] made on the enemy [or privileged] status and the individual [must emerge], the underprivileged ... must [also] be status free ... in either case love is possible only between two freed spirits." The attack must be made on the type of "contact without fellowship" that often determines our relationships as we seek justice. Jesus must be in the middle. Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls this relating to others through Jesus Christ. Being in Jesus' presence isn't enough. We'll need an intimacy with Jesus that touches us in the places necessary to see and experience ourselves and others truly, freely (see Mark 7:32-35). Intimate love and freedom are the ingredients for happiness. We'll need action and happiness to keep our faith truly alive (see James 2:14-17)!

[SEPTEMBER 13]

Words Are Political

Proverbs 1:20-33; Psalm 116:1-9; James 3:1-12; Mark 8:27-38

THEOLOGIAN Stanley Hauerwas once said, "You can only act in the world you can see and you can only see by learning to say." Words are political. Language is ethics. We learn from a young age that "your mouth can get you in trouble." I can still recall the taste of Ivory soap after getting my mouth washed out! The author of James tells us in no uncertain terms that the tongue is compared to an untamed fire, from it comes blessings and curses (James 3:8-9). Peter puts this on display (Mark 8:27-38). Out of the same mouth that Peter proclaims Jesus as Messiah, Peter rebukes Jesus' foretelling his own death. The irony of Peter's misunderstanding is deafening. Jesus hears it too and names Satan as the only source from which such audacious chatter could emerge.

Jesus quickly links Peter's words to discipleship and so to our words also. What we speak from our mouths enacts the type of lives we will live. We will "eat the fruit" of our lips (Proverbs 1:31a). That could be a foolish life full of death, loss, and division (Proverbs 1:23-32). Jesus says the only life worth living is one that takes up the cross and follows him. Lest we think that this cruciform following only applies to actions, Jesus says: "Those who are ashamed of me and of

The disciples are still stuck on who's the greatest.

my words, of them the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his glory" (Luke 9:26). So we'll need to learn to follow Jesus' actions *and* his words. We'll need to learn to speak anew. Not to worry, though; God promises to give us God's words (Proverbs 1:23b). They are words that lead to a wise life, one that overcomes death, tears, and stumbling (Psalm 116:8-9). And God has plenty of words to go around; Pentecostal speech pours out freely so that all might know God's life and love. Finally, speaking these words isn't really enough; they deserve a song, as Charles Wesley reminds: "O for a thousand tongues to sing my great Redeemer's praise."

[SEPTEMBER 20]

'I Must Be First'

Proverbs 31:10-31; Psalm 54;
James 3:13 - 4:3, 7-8a; Mark 9:30-37

A 2015 PEW survey on religious patterns in America has leaders from various backgrounds and denominations offering conflicting interpretations for the causes of the "decline" in religious participation and proposing strategies for future growth. Could this be our contemporary form of arguing over "who is the greatest?" (Mark 9:33-34). Martin Luther King Jr. called this impulse for greatness the "drum major instinct." He reminded us that each one of us has it—and the church has it too. King's critique of this impulse in terms of nationalism must now be turned toward the church itself. The church is saying: "I must be first. I must be supreme. Our [church] must rule the world." Like the empires of old, God will "break the back-bone" of the church's power if we don't stop our recklessness, our covetousness for what is big and mighty, our disputes over security, our boasting over responsibility—and our defensiveness over the lack thereof.

This is not the wisdom from God but something "earthly, unspiritual, devilish" (James 3:15b). Rather than strategy, submission is in order, single-mindedness is required, resisting evil is incumbent; only repenting and returning to God will save us.

This returning is none other than Jesus calling his church, like Jesus called the disciples, into an intimate place, away from the trappings, to gently remind us: "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35). Yet we fail to understand that to be last and a servant in Jesus' economy is to die, to take up a cross, to be lowly, little, and least (Mark 9:32-36). Since the church has not come to fully understand this, we are not truly capable of asking for what we need: deliverance, exoneration, and resurrection! This is a power altogether different from the distortions of the drum major instinct. God is asking the church to be "a capable wife" (Proverbs 31:10-31). I pray the church responds "I am she," in order to receive the Spirit's empowerment to be, in the cadence of Dr. King, a drum major for love, for moral excellence, for generosity, for justice, for peace, for righteousness (James 3:17).

[SEPTEMBER 27]

Our Esther Moments

Esther 7:1-6, 9-10, 9:20-22; Psalm 19:7-14;
James 5:13-20; Mark 9:38-50

THE DISCIPLES ARE still stuck on the question of who's the greatest. They've pitched a fit over other Christians with whom they disagree (see Mark 9:38). Jesus isn't as nice and safe this time. He says there's room for anyone who claims—and is not against—his name and people, even if they don't follow a particular group (Mark 9:39-41). This is a prescient word for our time with endless talk of schisms within Christian fellowships over all sorts of matters, from homosexuality to the "nones." However, these matters don't center on the essentials that Jesus names as non-negotiables. Jesus ties our tendencies to sectarianism with causing those young in the faith to "stumble." He ratchets up the terms to help the disciples understand that the true life of discipleship requires not only Christian unity and nurturing those young in faith but also intentional self-discipline (Mark 9:43-48) in order to keep true disciples distinctive, that they have a "saltiness" that preserves their distinctive flavor in the world (Mark 9:49-50). Not only that, but salt that hasn't lost its flavor will preserve disciples in the midst of trials, even crosses. Jesus is preparing the disciples for theirs. We'd be wise to take notice as well.

One of the ways we most lack awareness is in speaking up when it counts. We regularly miss our "such a time as this" moments (Esther 4:14). Esther didn't miss hers (Esther 7:3-6)! She saved her people (Esther 9:20-22). Our silences about injustices are sin. Might we bring each other to account? We'll save one another (James 5:19-20) and maybe keep our salt flavorful. But we'll need a prayer to move from "maybe" to confidence: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer" (Psalm 19:14). ■

"Living the Word" reflections for October can be found at sojo.net/magazine. "Preaching the Word," Sojourners' online resource for sermon preparation and Bible study, is available at sojo.net/ptw.

WALK HUMBLY

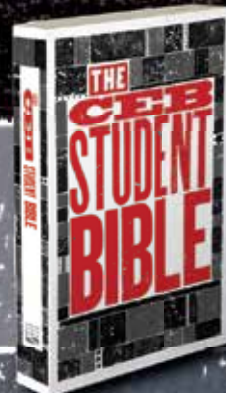
Micah 6:8 CEB



SOMETIMES PEOPLE THINK of the Bible as a self-help book or advice column—especially when they give the Bible to young people. But if you've ever actually gone to the Bible for simple answers, you've probably come back with more questions than you started with. And this can be discouraging.

The more you read it, the more you notice the contradictions, the paradoxes, the things that don't make sense for your life today, the things that raise serious questions. And rather than getting frustrated by it, we invite you to think of it as a good thing. What makes this Bible different is that these questions and complexities are lifted up, rather than ignored or made into easy answers.

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Countdown to Destiny

AS ONE OF the few white males who has not declared his candidacy for president, I'm actually enjoying the relative calm before the upcoming election season. Our television shows are still punctuated by soothingly predictable commercials about luxury cars and erectile dysfunction. In a few months they'll be railing against job-killing gay marriage and the evils of climate science, also job-killing, followed by the reassuring voice of a man who says "I apologize for this message." (Kidding. But wouldn't that be *great*?!)

At this point, with little at stake, the legions of Republican candidates are of interest only for their entertainment value, their speeches lacking in substance but their repetitive talking points ripe with possibility for drinking games. (Caution: When listening to Ted

and announce, with weary but heartfelt conviction, "Okay, *fine*." And given what she'll be up against, The Audacity of Fine may be good enough.

AS THE 2016 candidate list grows longer—and more irritable, given Chris Christie's announcement—the names are almost too numerous to print on a single page, so I'll just mention the ones that don't have a chance in your hell or your high water, starting with Chris Christie. And then there's Bobby Jindal, a man of intellect who at one time was considered the *actual* smarter brother of George W. Bush. But that was before aliens took over his body and turned him into Barry Goldwater, but with better hair. The latest polling registered him at zero percent approval, plus or minus zero. So using the process of elimination, Bobby Jindal has already been eliminated.

Also eliminated are Skip Andrews, Michael Bickelmeyer, and Kerry Bowers, actual declared candidates—they filled out the forms and everything—who I never heard of before today, or after today, for that matter.

Another temporary candidate is Carly Fiorina, an experienced business leader who, as CEO of Hewlett-Packard, laid off 30,000 more workers than Hillary Clinton. Women candidates seem to be trending into next year's election, although it remains to be seen if the female gender has staying power—it's barely in the majority of the human species—or if it's just another fad, like the internet.

And I almost forgot Rick



Perry, who is running on the Texas Economic Miracle, which created thousands of jobs at wages no one can live on. This is also known as the Burger King Miracle, the Billy Bob's Car Wash Miracle, and the, uhm, I forget the other one. Oops.

THE LARGE NUMBER of candidates reflects the ease with which Americans can run for president. You just fill out the Statement of Candidacy (FEC Form 2[pdf]) and instruct your campaign to file a Statement of Organization (FEC Form 1[pdf]). Then raise a billion dollars, approximately.

This money should come mainly from friends and relatives, and not from wealthy people with an agenda, otherwise you risk the appearance of *quid pro quo*, which is Latin for "I scratch your back, you scratch mine, then do my laundry, sweep the driveway, and take this package across town to a guy I know."

Unfortunately, special interests have already started fund raising for the next election. The Koch brothers, for example, are way ahead in bake sales and car washes.

And this winter they'll be selling wrapping paper. (My favorite is in Citizens United green.) ■

Ed Spivey Jr. is art director of Sojourners.

It's also called the process of elimination, an apt phrase.

Cruz, don't choose the words "constitution" or "unadulterated judicial activism" if you're the designated driver.)

We're at that sweet spot in time when Iowa is just a state known for its agricultural products (corn, I think), and when Hillary Clinton has not yet been compared to Hitler. If we think about politics at all, it's to come up with reasons not to support Bernie Sanders. Because, if you set aside the oddity of a Vermont senator who still sounds like the Flatbush of his youth, there's only one reason: his age. He's 73, six years older than Hillary Clinton and decades older than Donald Trump, who is, like, 12, right?

Realistically, Sanders would only serve for one term and then step aside for Elizabeth Warren, who would be pushed—shoved, actually—onto the stage at the Democratic Convention



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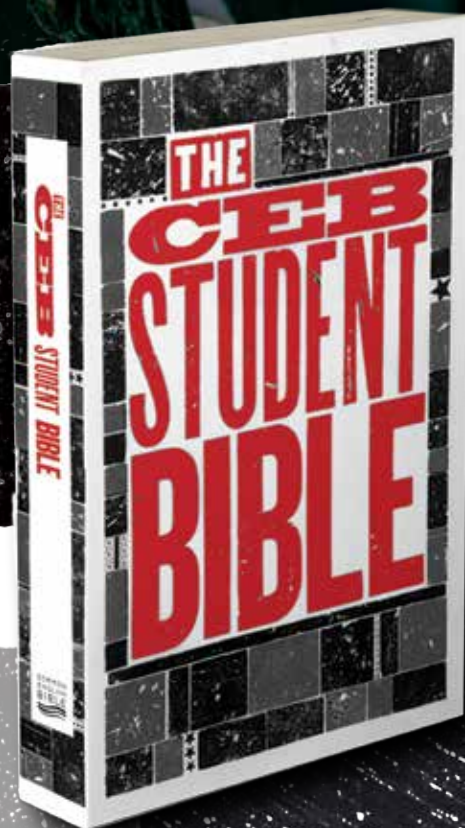
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